the weekly Standard

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TV JOURNALISM AS OXYMORON
ANDREW FERGUSON

THE BUSH DOCTRINE

ABM, Kyoto, and the new American unilateralism

BY CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER

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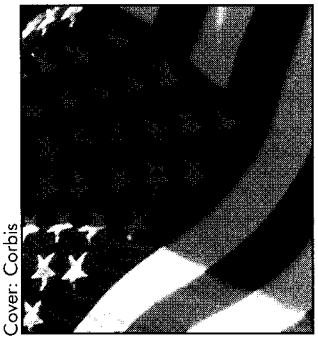

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The Dimmest Kennedy?

Ever since the *New Republic* labeled Joe Kennedy, the now-retired Massachusetts congressman, "the Dumbest Kennedy," family-watchers have fiercely debated: Can this possibly be fair? After all, competition for that distinction is stiff. Indeed, THE SCRAPBOOK has always been partial to representative Patrick Kennedy, trasher of yachts, mauler of airport security guards, son of Teddy (or, as the *Boston Herald*'s Howie Carr once put it, "the runt of the runt's litter").

Our boosterism comes not just because Patrick's own mother once described him as a "slow starter." Or because he said that as a Kennedy, he'd never have to worry about "making mends meet." Rather, Patrick is our man because of performances like the one he gave at a recent congressional hearing, in which Louis Freeh was supposed to be getting grilled about the FBI's bungling of the Timothy McVeigh case.

Never one to bypass an opportunity for cheap partisan grandstanding, Patrick steered the inquiry into a ditch by demanding to know Freeh's position on capital punishment. What this had to do with the price of potassium chloride in Terre Haute wasn't clear, but it did allow Kennedy (who has twice switched positions on the death penalty—he's currently against it) to get off some howlers, such as, "What is your answer to the fact that . . . minorities and poor people have a greater likelihood of being put to death than they have of getting cancer from smoking?"

When we asked Kennedy's office to give us the specific reference for his executed-minorities-to-smoking-deaths ratio, they gave us a statement from Kennedy, explaining that the information originated with Richard Dieter, author of *The Death Penalty in Black & White: Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Decides*. Dieter states that "Race is more likely to affect death sentencing than smoking affects the likelihood of dying from heart disease." Oops—not exactly the same. "He kind of paraphrased it," explains Kennedy spokesman Larry Berman.

There is, however, good news for the Rhode Island Democrat, who's seen his home-state favorability rating drop so precipitously that Republicans believe they might have a crack at his seat. There may be a new contestant in the Dimmest Kennedy sweepstakes. Cousin Max, who's considering a run for cancer-stricken Joe Moakley's seat, gave a Patrick-like coming-out speech the other day to the Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps. The *Boston Globe* reported that Max "lost his place, appeared confused, and, at one point, erupted in nervous laughter for no apparent reason." Later in the day, he described former Supreme Court justice Byron White, whom Uncle John appointed to the Supreme Court, and who retired in 1993, as a current justice. While one of Kennedy's supporters described the event as being "one of those times when you want to close your eyes," Max said, "I had fun."

We'll all have fun if he runs for Congress, something that shouldn't be difficult since, with his family's extensive donor network, Max should have no trouble making mends meet. ♦

Beijing 2008= Berlin 1936?

Scripps Howard reports that the Bush administration will "make nice with China by declining to oppose Beijing's bid to host the 2008 Summer Olympic Games." When the International Olympic Committee meets July 13 to choose between Beijing, Paris, and Toronto, the "White House has decided not to blatantly inject politics into what is supposed to be an apolitical process."

That "supposed to be" is rich. The history of selecting Olympic host cities shows it to be an almost exclusively political process, when it is not a criminal one. Still, let's hope the IOC snubs Beijing, with or without U.S. pressure, so that the world can avoid the most demoralizing propaganda show since the 1936 Berlin Olympics.

Those games were a triumph for the Reich, as related in compelling detail in Ian Kershaw's *Hitler* biography: "Hitler attended almost every day—underlining the significance of the Games—the crowd rising in salute each time he entered the stadium. The German media coverage was massive. Over 3,000 programmes were transmitted worldwide in around fifty languages; over 100 radio stations in the USA alone took transmission. . . . Many more millions had read reports of them, or seen newsreel coverage. And of paramount importance: Hitler's Germany had been open to viewing for visitors from all over the world. Most of them went away mightily impressed. 'I'm afraid the Nazis have succeeded with their propaganda,' noted the American journalist William Shirer. 'First, they have run the games on a lavish scale never before experienced, and this has appealed to the athletes. Second, they have put up a very good front for the general visitors, especially the big businessmen.' . . . The enthusiastic Hitler Youth activist Melita Maschmann later recalled young people returning to their own countries with a similar posi-

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tive and peaceful image of Germany. 'In all of us,' she remembered, 'there was the hope in a future of peace and friendship.'"

By all means, Beijing should host the Olympic games. But not until the current regime, still propped up by torture, fear, and deadly force, has been replaced by a democratic one. ♦

Jeffords Conflict at the *New York Times*

Mickey Kaus, editor of the indispensable *kausfiles.com*, spotted this excellent bit of discord between the news and editorial duchies at the *New York Times*.

"The House voted to approve [an education bill] which calls for a 29 percent increase in spending to $24 billion for next year. The measure was written by Republicans and Democrats using President Bush's plan as a blueprint." —*NYT, page A1, 5/24/01.*

"Mr. Bush's rejection of increased education spending in the budget has made a mockery of his pledge to 'leave no child behind.'" —*Howell Raines's NYT editorial page, same day.*

"It's lucky," Kaus notes sarcastically, that "the guy who produces that sort of unthinking hackneyed propaganda isn't taking over the whole paper!" ♦

Daffy Qaddafi

As The Scrapbook reported a couple of weeks ago, the Bush administration is being lobbied to end the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act, up for renewal this August. On May 25, Vice President Cheney seemed to suggest that lifting sanctions on Libya, Iran, and Iraq might be under consideration as part of the administration's energy strategy. "There's going to have to be some other change in the climate, in the environment over there and the conduct of those governments, I would think, before Congress is going to be comfortable lifting those sanctions," said Cheney. "But we are looking at it."

One thing they might look at before being bewitched by the sweet fragrance of Libyan oil is dictator Muammar Qaddafi's recent arrest of six Bulgarian medical workers. Since February 1999, Qaddafi has held them on suspicion of infecting 393 children with the HIV virus at Benghazi children's hospital. The five nurses and one doctor could face the death penalty.

At an African AIDS summit last month, Qaddafi explained the origins of the virus: "The answer is that the laboratories of the U.S. Secret Service, the CIA, have used viruses in biological wars which led to the birth of the AIDS virus. Yes, this is the astonishing truth. That is why they are avoiding the question and the answer. They carried out experiments in their laboratories by injecting this virus on prisoners in Haiti, because they were blacks from Africa. They were used as guinea-pigs. They infected them with this virus and kept watching them. These prisoners died of AIDS in Haiti."

And what about those Bulgarians? Who put them up to this? Says Qaddafi, "Some said it was the CIA. Others said it was the Mossad Israeli intelligence."

We say it's all in his twisted mind. Let's keep the sanctions. ♦

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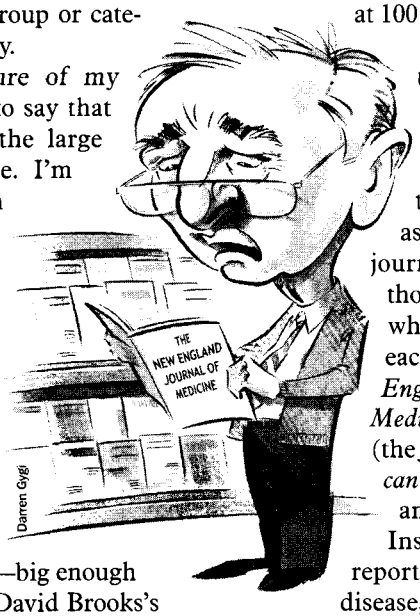
Casual

The Worried Well

I went to a high school with perhaps fifty different extracurricular clubs that, whatever their other shortcomings, at least let one know one's exact social standing. Status under this arrangement was as finely calibrated as any I have since encountered. Athletes, good guys, ladies' men, genial screw-offs, the quietly out of it, even the hopelessly *déclassé*, each had a club of their own. I don't yearn to return to my adolescence, even though mine—luck of the draw—was an amusing one, but I have until recently suffered some confusion about what group or category I belong to today.

I'm not even sure of my social class, except to say that it's somewhere in the large and squishy middle. I'm certain that I am (*pace* William H. Whyte) no Organization Man; nor (*pace* David Reisman) inner- or other- or tradition-directed. I've never been the man in the grey flannel suit. I haven't a kitchen or bathrooms—or bankroll—big enough to qualify as one of David Brooks's Bobos. I'm too young to have been formed by the Depression, and too old to be a Baby Boomer. During the Me Decade, I lived chiefly for others. During the supposedly greedy 1980s, I managed to show a loss. With no children at home, I suppose I am an empty nester, but there's not a lot of distinction in that. As the line from the song says, "I just don't see me anywhere."

Or at least I didn't until the other day, when I first heard the phrase "the worried well." Flash: Floodlights went on everywhere, and I felt I had found my place at last. The worried well, I grasped at once, that's me and my fellow closet hypochondriacs. Except that there are so many of us worried well that I'm not sure the word *hypochondriac* quite applies. Where everyone is mad, after all, the word *psychotic* loses some of its punch. The worried well constitute those vast numbers who are, from the standpoint of health, just fine but don't believe it is going to last. And of course we are right, for the mortality rate in this country, when last checked, was still rounding off neatly at 100 percent.



What has swelled the ranks of the worried well in recent decades has been that nasty little endeavor known as health or medical journalism. I speak of those wretched jaspers whose job it is to scour each issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine* and *JAMA* (the *Journal of the American Medical Association*) and every National Institutes of Health report for news of fresh disease, depressing health trends, and rising rates of one or another kind of human decomposition. We, the worried well, thumbing through our daily papers or tuned in to local and national news channels, read and listen to it all, and tensely sit, waiting for the other flu to fall.

What's new, pussycat? A new strain of leukemia has been discovered, previous cholesterol numbers need to be adjusted downward, osteoporosis isn't a serious problem only for small, light-boned women. Three new miracle drugs have been developed whose side effects are just slightly more horrendous than the diseases they set out to cure. A study at Stanford finds that all allergies will be conquered by mid-century; unfortunately, another study at Penn State has found that allergies generally are on the rise. We sleep tonight, badly—medical journalism stands guard.

Bumps, blemishes, bruises slow to heal, the least deviation from perfection—worrisome all to the worried well. We go to physicians the way other people go to an IRS audit, sure that we aren't going to come out smiling. What sort of hepatitis, arthritis, meningitis lurks within our cells, bones, genes? We don't, ever, feel quite right. "When was the last time you felt really good?" a radio commercial for a local health club asks. "1950," I answer, "when I was thirteen."

We worried well, bounced around by all the conflicting medical news, have peculiar habits. We go for weeks at a time without eating red meat. We take various—and, no doubt, counteracting—vitamins. Many of us jog; others regularly go off on lengthy walks, arms swinging vigorously, looks of grim determination on our faces. Except when the endorphins kick in, we tend to seem mildly depressed. We're well, thank you for asking, but worried, very worried.

We follow the health news the way others follow the stock market. "New hope, new options for breast cancer," Tom Brokaw reports. But then Peter Jennings tells us that there is altogether too much lead in the atmosphere. New medicine is available to lower the incidence of strokes. But then, wouldn't you know it, the diabetes rate has risen nationwide. Like the Dow and the Nasdaq, up one day, down the next. We're the worried well, for whom life is hell.

Which does not mean we are ready to depart it. None of us feels, as did Noel Coward, that "life and love and fame and fortune can all be disappointing, but not dear old oblivion. Hurray for eternity!" We'd like just one more salad, please, and perhaps a cup of green tea before we go.

Joseph Epstein

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Tough Lovins

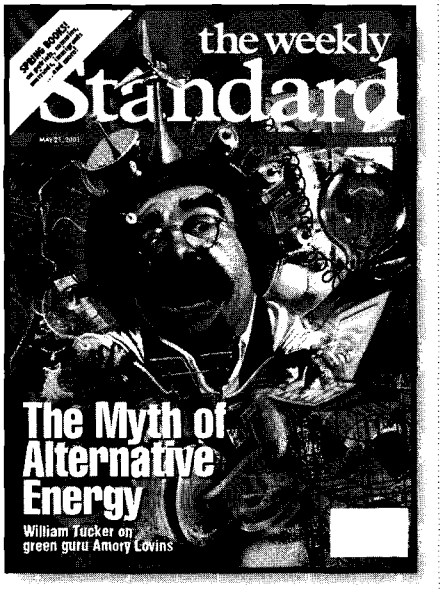
William Tucker's long cover story in your May 21 issue is a disgrace to journalism ("The Myth of Alternative Energy"). So long as California followed my advice to do the cheapest things first, chiefly efficient energy use, that state had ample electricity (one-third of it renewable), held per capita use of electricity flat for a quarter-century, added 15 billion watts of efficiency and renewable resources, and saved billions of net dollars. Even during the 1990s, California installed more decentralized generating capacity than its total nuclear capacity.

The California electricity crisis was caused by the state government's rejecting in the mid-1990s, over my protest, what had worked well—and still does for the municipal utilities that continued to follow it and weren't restructured. The crisis has many complex causes, but the main one is nutty restructuring that created a ticket-scalper's paradise. Seven firms control two-thirds of the biddable market, so each can move the market and can earn more profit by generating less electricity at a higher price than more at a lower price. This travesty of competition is not a test of my ideas but their opposite.

Tucker further attacks me as a "bit of a crackpot" with "sloppy or ill-thought-out ideas," some "on the fringes of scientific speculation" (apparently a reference to Professor Gold's deep-methane hypothesis, which I mentioned in passing but told Mr. Tucker is controversial and in no way underlies my and the major energy firms' identical view of abundant natural gas resources). He even claims that my hydrogen transition proposal "defies the laws of physics"—laws he evidently doesn't understand as well as do the major energy and car companies that are implementing my approach for profit. If the scores of major energy and other firms that have benefited from my advice over the past few decades shared his skepticism, they would hardly continue to pay the Rocky Mountain Institute for that advice, prestigious journals would not publish it, and my work would not be recognized by leading awards and featured in top business publications. Perhaps these authorities know something he doesn't.

Tucker's belief system rests on denial of any practical alternatives to building more coal-fired and nuclear power plants. The market disagrees and is vigorously investing in those alternatives: Wind and photovoltaics are the fastest-growing energy sources worldwide, and wind alone, now the cheapest new generating option in the United States, is adding more global capacity each year than nuclear power did through the 1990s.

Distributed generation is the hottest electricity market trend, simply because it's cheaper and more reliable than the now-obsolete central-station-and-grid



solutions. The supposed unreliability of renewable sources is an old canard debunked two decades ago. That's why the European Union expects to get 22 percent of its electricity from renewable sources in 2010, and Denmark plans to get half its power from wind turbines in 2030.

Tucker seems blissfully unaware of these modern energy options and trends—or that his favorite technologies are failing in the marketplace. As the current *Economist* remarks, "In fact, the trend since the mid-1970s has been toward smaller plants. It is micropower, not megapower, that the market favors, thanks to the far smaller financial risk involved." Nuclear power, concludes the *Economist*, has gone from too cheap to meter to too costly to matter.

Before Tucker wrote this article, I gave him a lengthy interview, ignoring his insulting and accusatory tone and carefully correcting in detail his misunderstandings of each of the topics he misrepresents—my supposed errors about hydrogen and gasohol, what happened to California electricity and U.S. renewable energy, etc. He ignored or failed to grasp everything I told him. The resulting article is a tissue of falsehoods written with reckless disregard for the truth. Shame on him. Shame on you.

Amory B. Lovins
Chief Executive Officer (Research)
Rocky Mountain Institute, Inc.
Snowmass, CO

William Tucker responds: Amory Lovins holds up the "municipal utilities that continue to follow [my advice] and weren't restructured" as proof that his "soft path" could have worked. The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power is the prime example. The municipal utility has become the beacon of hope in the California debacle because it has kept electricity flowing without raising its rates. What no one in the press has asked, though, is, "How does LADWP generate its electricity?" Here are the figures:

LADWP gets 50 percent of its power from coal plants in Utah, Nevada, and Arizona, plus 10 percent from the Palo Verde nuclear plant near Phoenix. Another 30 percent comes from natural gas plants around Los Angeles. The final 10 percent is from hydro, half of that from the federally owned Hoover Dam. Where are the alternative energies? There are none.

As a favor to a fellow municipal authority, the California Public Utilities Commission set LADWP "replacement costs" very low. This meant that the producers of wind and garbage-burning "alternatives" found it uneconomical to force the LADWP to sign long-term contracts to buy their expensive and often unusable power, as federal law allows. It is precisely because the Los Angeles municipal utility was spared the forced march down the soft path that it is in reasonably good shape today.

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Lovins says he told me "Professor Gold's deep-methane hypothesis, which I mentioned in passing . . . is controversial and in no way underlies my and the major energy firms' identical view of abundant natural gas resources." Here are his exact words:

"You might want to ask yourself, as Tommy Gold does, why there are very large objects in the solar system that have enormous amounts of methane on them and as far as we know nothing has ever lived there. Regardless of what you think of Gold's theories about methane formation in the deep, hot biosphere, the fact is there's a hell of a lot of methane in the solar system that does not appear to come from living things. It is ubiquitous and abundant on earth as well."

Professor Gold's projections of almost unlimited natural gas supplies are essential to Lovins's "hydrogen transition" because—as emphasized in the article—hydrogen is only a carrier of energy. It can only store energy generated from natural gas or other natural resources.

As for the auto companies trying to build hydrogen cars, I certainly don't dispute that. My argument is with Lovins's supplementary hypothesis that electricity generated by a fleet of hydrogen-powered cars can—as he told *Fortune*—"end the car, oil, steel, aluminum, nuclear, coal, and electricity industries." He proposes doing this with either (1) virtually unlimited supplies of natural gas or (2) electricity from the grid. Using electricity from the grid to replace the electrical grid, as I pointed out, defies the laws of physics. I don't dispute that power companies are scaling down their plants, but that doesn't necessarily support Lovins's soft-energy thesis.

The power industry has abandoned 1,000-megawatt plants because they created too much "supply overhang." Instead they are proposing and building 500-mw plants—including the possibility of some 500-mw nuclear plants—because smaller plants are more economical. Lovins thinks 500-mw gas generators are still too big and opposes everything larger than 250-mw gas-fired co-generation plants. This is all California has built in the last 20 years and that is why it is short of electricity.

Finally, I do not dispute that Lovins has been "recognized by leading awards and featured in top business publications." My point is that much of this praise has been naive and uncritical. One reason that Lovins took our rather amiable conversation to be "insulting and accusatory," I suspect, is that he has hardly ever before encountered skeptical questioning from the press.

Critical Massing

I'M FLATTERED that David Tell devoted so much of his editorial about John Walters ("John Walters and His Critics," May 21) to attacking my article about Walters in the *Washington Post*. It obviously struck a nerve. And I'm amused that he accuses me of bias while noting that many staff members of THE WEEKLY STANDARD are friends of Walters and that some—including himself—worked for him.

In my article, I described Walters's determination to step up the drug war in Latin America and the U.S. military's involvement in it. Among other things, I noted that Walters hired as his top aide a former Navy SEAL. Tell disputes this. Has he truly forgotten about Ted Grabowski, a former Navy captain whom Walters brought over from the Pentagon to advise him? Several former ONDCP employees told me that Walters came to rely heavily on Grabowski. Tell himself, in an interview several years ago, mentioned Grabowski to me, dismissing him as a "schmuck."

Tell describes as "perhaps" a "lie" (obviously he doesn't know for sure) my observation that Walters subscribed to the "kingpin" theory of drug enforcement. This theory holds that trafficking organizations can be destroyed by hunting down and capturing their heads. This was one of Walters's central goals. ONDCP's 1992 Annual Strategy (which Walters supervised) states that a top U.S. objective in the Andes was to "strengthen" the capacity of local authorities "to arrest, prosecute, incarcerate, and, where appropriate, extradite key traffickers." This *is* the kingpin strategy.

Tell also describes as "perhaps" a "lie" my statement that Walters's Andean strategy marked the start of the Peruvian air force's shoot-down policy of drug planes; this policy, he alleges, began only under Bill Clinton. Wrong again. As the *Washington Post* reported on its front page on April 29, the United States from 1990 to 1992 "encouraged" Peruvian president Alberto Fujimori to unleash his military "to attack clandestine airstrips, patrol transit routes and, most important, shoot down suspected traffickers." All this occurred on Walters's watch.

Finally, Tell attacks me for writing that, during Walters's time at ONDCP, "federal spending on treatment did increase some, but not nearly enough to meet the demand." While he's correct that treatment spending increased more under Bush than under other administrations, this in no way contradicts my point that such funding fell far short of the demand. Bush's own treatment director, Dr. Herbert Kleber, resigned out of frustration with ONDCP's failure to do more to treat addicts.

Tell asserts that I have "masterfully disguised" a "stubborn bias" in favor of reducing the criminal penalties for drug offenses. Disguised? In my book *The Fix*, I explicitly argue that drug penalties are too severe. Even such a radical as George Pataki, the Republican governor of New York, has come around to this view, announcing his intention to soften New York's draconian drug laws. Based on everything I've seen, John Walters still believes that low-level drug offenders should be locked away for years. It is such hard-line views that disturb me, and the editors of the *New York Times*, and the many other Americans—conservative as well as liberal—who have become frustrated with the excesses of America's failed drug war.

MICHAEL MASSING
New York, NY

DAVID TELL RESPONDS: Michael Massing is flattered that I have spent five paragraphs discussing my doubts about his honesty. I will flatter him some more.

In *The Fix* Massing argues that the federal drug budget is grossly imbalanced as between law enforcement and treatment services—and that some $2.65 billion should be transferred, presto, out

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of the former category and into the latter. As likely targets for cutback or elimination on the "supply side" of the equation, he identifies the government's entire annual appropriation for source-country programs, border security, and the Drug Enforcement Administration. But "most bloated of all," he contends, is the Federal Bureau of Prisons, "which spends about $2 billion a year . . . to warehouse small-time drug offenders."

Herein lies the disguise, maintained in his letter above: Massing's picture of the federal inmate population is a fantasy. In 1991, the last year for which comprehensive data are available, the average prisoner serving time for marijuana possession—the very smallest of "small-time" federal offenses—had been sentenced for a crime involving 4,631 pounds of the stuff, with a minimum street value of $1.85 million. There is no indication in subsequent statistics that offense-profiles for inmates serving marijuana or other possession sentences have changed much at all since then.

And at the end of Fiscal 1999, the same year *The Fix* was published, there were only 525 such inmates. We could set all of them free and still not produce but a fraction of the savings Massing says are needed to fund new treatment services. No matter: It would be "beneficial in its own right" if a full $2.65 billion were hacked out of the drug enforcement budget. What Massing never explicitly acknowledges is that such a move would make necessary an effective federal amnesty for many, if not most, past and future *trafficking* offenses.

John Walters has never believed that genuine "low-level drug offenders" should be "locked away for years"—or locked away at all—and Michael Massing cannot produce a shred of evidence to the contrary. Massing's calls for reduced penalties must involve a different breed of criminal altogether.

In his *Washington Post* essay, Massing scored Walters for alleged active hostility to federal drug treatment programs. The charge was demonstrably false. During the four years Walters led the White House drug office staff, Bush administration treatment budgets doubled, to an annual $2 billion, a record Massing now concedes is unsurpassed. Nationwide drug treatment capacity has always fallen "far short" of theoretical "demand." It has also always suffered a significant vacancy rate; Massing's fall-back argument here makes frivolous an extremely complicated question. As to my good friend Herb Kleber: I am quite certain he *was* frustrated by ONDCP's failure to do more for victims of addiction—as were we all, John Walters included. But I cannot see how our frustration can fairly be used to minimize what considerable good we did manage to accomplish.

Massing's misconceptions about the history of Peru's "shoot-down" policy are embarrassing. Or worse. The April 29 *Washington Post* does not, in fact, date purported American support for that policy to 1990, but to 1992. And even there the *Post*—and Massing—are mistaken. The Bush administration formally and publicly opposed, as illegal under the 1984 Aircraft Sabotoge Act, any American participation in mid-air attacks on civil aviation. In those days, Washington "encouraged" (and helped) Peru only with real-time tracking of drug flights, so as to facilitate the identification of clandestine airstrips for future destruction. No joint U.S.-Peruvian mission resulted in an actual shoot-down until 1995. And that was only because President Clinton, the previous year, had signed revised legislation and two national security directives which newly authorized the practice.

No, the sentence Massing quotes from the 1992 *National Drug Control Strategy*, lifted almost verbatim from an earlier document I wrote myself, is very much not the "kingpin strategy." There was such a strategy, employed by the DEA during the Reagan administration. But in a series of inter-agency meetings led by John Walters over the first few months of 1989, DEA was persuaded to set aside its "decapitation" emphasis in favor of "lateral" efforts against the entire crop-to-crack-house trafficking chain. Granted, White House publications were nowhere so crude as to announce that DEA's past "kingpin" work had been fruitless and stupid, and subsidiary efforts against "key traffickers" certainly continued. But a major change was nevertheless understood to have taken place by everyone in the business. If Massing were half the expert he pretends to be, he would understand it, too.

Then there is Massing's bewildering insistence that my job as deputy chief of staff in the Bush drug office was a fiction, and that a "former Navy SEAL" was actually John Walters's Svengali. He evidently has in mind a man named Ted Grabowsky, yet another friend of mine, a then-active-duty (not "former") Navy officer who worked in the office's "supply reduction" shop. And whose name Massing does not know how to spell.

The Fix contains a cartoon account of the Bush-era ONDCP as dominated by a handful of inexperienced political hacks and college professors (yours truly and John Walters), while the agency's true drug-policy experts were consigned to lower floors of the building—and studiously ignored. In real life, as it happens, Ted Grabowsky was assigned to one of those lower floors. Which may be why his name does not appear in Massing's book, even in mangled form. Yet now, all of a sudden, Massing has decided to resurrect Grabowsky as Edith Wilson to John Walters's Woodrow Wilson. And somehow imagines that the slur he attributes to me—dismissing my friend as a "schmuck"—helps fortify, rather than explode, the charade.

I will close by pointing out that the terms of my long-ago interview with Massing obliged him to call me for permission before ever using my words in print. If indeed I once for some inexplicable reason called Ted Grabowsky a "schmuck," it means I owe my friend an apology. And it means Michael Massing has violated the confidence of a source.

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the weekly Standard

Faith and Poverty

The week's political news had reporters in Washington working overtime. The Senate passed a $1.35 trillion tax cut, the biggest in 20 years. The House approved an education bill that would require the states, for the first time, to test students and identify failing schools. The Senate finally (if barely) confirmed Theodore Olson as solicitor general. And, oh yes, James Jeffords of Vermont quit the Republican party, thereby enabling Democrats to gain control of the Senate and ending, prematurely, the GOP's first chance at unified government in 50 years.

The president also happened to give a commencement speech at Notre Dame—only to see it crowded out by all the other news. It addressed big ideas, including compassion, citizenship, and poverty, and it raised important issues. It's worth some notice—since it may mean more over the long term than all these other events.

Bush began by recalling a commencement speech made by Lyndon Johnson 37 years ago. This was the speech at the University of Michigan in which Johnson called for a War on Poverty. Bush quoted Johnson's challenge: "Will you decide to leave the future a society where a man is condemned to hopelessness because he was born poor? Or will you join to wipe out poverty in this land?" Bush didn't take exception to Johnson's endorsement of what we all know to be impossible—an actual end to poverty—perhaps because he knows that we all know that. Indeed, he used the term "War on Poverty" without irony, describing it as an undertaking of "noble intentions" that established "a federal commitment to the poor"—one that he, Bush, vowed to keep. Bush even credited the War on Poverty with some "enduring successes," such as Head Start, which is enduring but not a success.

Fortunately, Bush didn't spend long on the War on Poverty's ostensible successes but got quickly to its enduring negatives—how welfare entitlements became "an enemy of personal effort and responsibility." The 1996 welfare reform fixed that, he said, by imposing a limit on benefits and requiring work as a condition for receiving them. Welfare reform thus repudiated the very premise of the War on Poverty—that the poor are helpless victims of society. Bush, however, didn't go into this, nor did he point out what is now the consensus view—that through virtuous behavior many who are poor can exit from poverty. Instead, he emphasized that poverty remains because "the hardest problems remain—people with far fewer skills and greater barriers to work, people with complex human problems, like illiteracy and addiction, abuse and mental illness."

Notably, Bush left off this list what is widely agreed to be the hardest of the hard problems causing poverty—family decomposition. "The rise of the single-parent family," writes Joel Schwartz in his recent book *Fighting Poverty with Virtue*, "poses grave difficulties for the proper socialization of a great many of the children of the poor." What public policy might do to prevent family decomposition is a big question with no clear answer. You can imagine what might have happened had Bush engaged the issue. Dan Quayle did that in his Murphy Brown speech, only to find himself caught up for months afterwards in the sex-and-family culture wars. Bush, perhaps for good reason, chose to avoid this controversy.

Bush left off the list the hardest of the hard problems causing poverty—family decomposition. He chose to avoid that controversy.

Maybe he avoided it because he wanted to stay, as they say, on message, the message being an appeal to the non-poor to display the virtue of compassionate citizenship. "The War on Poverty," Bush said, "turned too many citizens into bystanders, convinced that compassion had become the work of government alone." Bush wants each of these bystanders to help bear another's burden. "Much of today's poverty has more to do with troubled lives than a troubled economy," Bush said. "And often when a life is broken, it can only be restored by another caring, concerned human being. The answer for an abandoned child is not a job requirement—it is the loving presence of a mentor. The answer to addiction is not a demand for self-sufficiency—it is personal support on the hard road to recovery."

Bush could have ended his remarks here. Actually, he was only warming to his main subject—his Faith-Based and Community Initiative. Compassion, he said, often works best "on a small and human scale," but there aren't enough small groups offering compassion. "Our society must enlist, equip, and empower" such groups. This, as he pointed out, is what his initiative hopes to bring about.

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Ultimately it contemplates the emergence of what he called "a caring society."

Bush described the elements of his initiative, including the expansion of "charitable choice," which is the principle that faith-based organizations shouldn't be discriminated against on grounds of religion when competing for social-service contracts. In defense of this principle, Bush said, "Government should never fund the teaching of faith, but it should support the good works of the faithful." Bush didn't pursue this further, yet there is an interesting issue here: What if the primary effect of government support of the good works of the faithful is to advance the faithful's religion? The Supreme Court has said that a government action which has the primary effect of advancing religion is unconstitutional. Should it be? Not too long ago, it was not. By pursuing charitable choice, Bush may reopen important questions of constitutional law. Down the road, his initiative could begin a move away from the secularism that has for the past 40 years dominated our public policies and our constitutional law, and lead us seriously to consider a new paradigm for the role of religion in public life.

But the more immediate question is whether Bush's faith-based initiative can make a difference in the short term. Prospects in Congress are questionable. Senator Rick Santorum of Pennsylvania complained last week that charitable choice was a "hot-button issue." Heaven forbid that our elected officials would have to deal with a controversial issue! But the good news, as his Notre Dame speech shows, is that the president is serious about his initiative. What's more, he has cast the initiative in terms—the reduction of poverty—that might eventually appeal to Democrats, whom he especially needs now that Jeffords has bolted.

But whether the initiative succeeds on the Hill—even whether it succeeds as a poverty-fighting measure—is not the whole story. It may not even be most of the story. If President Bush uses his bully pulpit to encourage the private sector to stop discriminating in its charitable contributions against faith-based groups, that could well make a big difference. More broadly still, the president's initiative could stimulate debate about the relation of faith and politics in America, and could force consideration of the virtues of a self-governing people and their relation to religious belief. George W. Bush's faith-based initiative is bold and important, and even politicians' reluctance to deal with "hot-button" issues won't and shouldn't make the debate surrounding this particular issue go away.

—Terry Eastland and William Kristol

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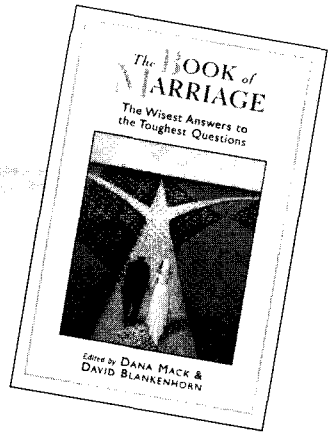

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Life After Jeffords

Bush should stick to his guns.

BY FRED BARNES

THE BUZZ IN THE MEDIA after senator James Jeffords's switch put Democrats in control of the Senate was that President Bush must change his ways. He has to become more moderate. Why? Because only that will prevent more Republican defections and it's the president's one hope for getting his agenda through Congress. This is wrong on both counts. Bush and GOP congressional leaders bent over backwards to accommodate Jeffords and liberal Democrats on education, the senator's top priority. Jeffords bolted anyway. On taxes, Bush stuck with his conservative tax cut until nearly the end, when he compromised just enough to assure passage. Jeffords voted with him.

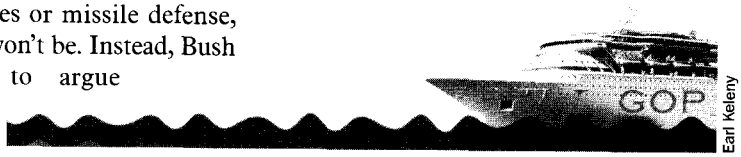
The truth about the impact of Jeffords's move is that no political earthquake has occurred. The Senate is ideologically unchanged. The swing votes in the Senate, including John McCain, are important, but they already were. There's no clear path to victory for the Bush agenda, after taxes and education, but that was always true. To pass a patients' bill of rights, a prescription drug benefit, or missile defense, a bipartisan coalition of some sort will be essential. Yes, there's one big change with Democrats taking over: judges. Bush will have a harder time getting conservative nominees through a Senate Judiciary Committee run by Patrick Leahy of Vermont, perhaps the most partisan Democrat on Capitol Hill. One more downbeat side effect: Jeffords's announcement overshadowed Bush's tax cut victory, denying him any political momentum he might have gotten from it.

The lesson here for Bush is that the best strategy is still the one that produced his greatest success, the tax cut. That means governing from the right, not the middle. If Bush starts with centrist proposals and then compromises with Democrats, he'll wind up with center-left legislation. That's what happened on education. But if he begins with conservative proposals and then goes after moderate Democrats, he's likely to get a center-right result. More often than not, Bush will have to overcome the opposition of Tom Daschle, the new majority leader. Daschle has a single goal, keeping the Senate in Democratic hands in the 2002 election. To achieve this, he's bent on denying Bush any victories.

The Jeffords defection reflects a broader trend in national politics—the growing division between the culturally and ideologically liberal Northeast and coasts and the conservative heartland and South. And no state has trended to the left more dramatically in recent years than Vermont. This made it awkward for Jeffords, more a liberal than a moderate, to stay in a Senate GOP caucus dominated by conservatives such as Jesse Helms of North Carolina. For Bush, the message is that liberal regions won't be wooed by compromises. Jeffords wasn't, and on judges or missile defense, Democrats won't be. Instead, Bush will have to argue aggressively for his position, stir public support, and pick off selected Democrats. Let Daschle order a filibuster. The public won't be pleased by blatant obstructionism. And most Americans want the country defended against missile attacks and prefer judges who favor tough law enforcement. Health care issues are another matter. There's no built-in public majority for Bush's conservative approach, so he may have to deal with Daschle on these.

The Democratic takeover unloosed several canards about Jeffords's motives and what lies ahead for Bush. Trent Lott, outgoing Senate majority leader, was faulted for not paying enough attention to moderates. Thus, Jeffords supposedly felt marginalized. Lott was asked how long he'd been talking to Jeffords. "Twenty-seven years," he said.

James Jeffords



Earl Keleny

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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He and Jeffords were both elected to the House in the early '70s and the Senate in 1988. In recent years, says Sen. Rick Santorum of Pennsylvania, Lott has given Jeffords more attention than any other senator. "He's never courted conservatives that way," says Santorum, a Lott ally. And Lott blocked repeated efforts by conservative senators to oust Jeffords from his committee chairmanship. He made sure conservatives never punished Jeffords in any way for voting with Democrats. Vague White House threats might have contributed to Jeffords's decision. But mostly, it was the circumstance: a 50-50 Senate and a chance to make history.

The irony of the switch is that Jeffords had more influence as a dissenting Republican than he's likely to have as a conforming Democrat. More than any senator, he's responsible for forcing Bush to reduce his tax cut by $300 billion. He was the major force behind making the child tax credit "refundable." In other words, it goes to people who didn't pay income taxes and aren't getting a refund. It's welfare. Jeffords didn't negotiate the education compromise, but his presence spurred it. "He's had a lot more success [in influencing the Senate] as a Republican member than any liberal Democrat has," Santorum insists. What Bush couldn't accept was Jeffords's demand to increase spending for education of the disabled by 15 times more than Bush had proposed. Democrats won't be able to swallow this either. They didn't when they controlled the Senate and the White House.

Another myth is that the agenda in Washington now changes. No, what changes is the schedule. Daschle plans to bring up a patients' bill of rights as the first order of business when he becomes majority leader. Lott was going to bring it up, too, only later this year. Still, control of the schedule is very important. Lott demonstrated this when he ordered a vote, on the day Jeffords announced he was jumping ship, to confirm Ted Olson as solicitor general. Daschle chose not to mount a filibuster or even noisy opposition as the first act of the coming Democratic majority. Olson was confirmed, 51-47. If Daschle had been officially in charge, he could have delayed the Olson nomination indefinitely.

There's a final issue that Jeffords's switch highlighted. Both the press and Democrats fault Bush for governing solely from the right. He's not. Just look at education, the environment, hiring quotas, the war on poverty, and trade with China. But the stereotype exists, and Jeffords's departure buttresses it. Democrats say Bush lost the popular vote and lacks a mandate, but is trying to impose a conservative program. Jeffords took up the he's-too-conservative cry. The danger here is that Bush, fearing reelection trouble, could overreact and veer to the left. Only a minor, leftward adjustment is needed. And Jeffords didn't change that. ♦

Michael Ramirez

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Is There a VAT in Our Future?

The Bush administration is surprisingly full of tax reformers. BY BRUCE BARTLETT

WHITE HOUSE officials are hopeful that the signing of George W. Bush's tax cut marks the beginning of their tax agenda, not its completion. The next item, they indicate, will be tax reform. While the president has yet to offer any clues about what sort of reform he will propose, his appointments to key positions already tell us a great deal.

Remarkably, every top tax policy official has been associated with a major tax reform proposal. These include Treasury secretary Paul O'Neill, National Economic Council director Lawrence Lindsey, Council of Economic Advisers chairman R. Glenn Hubbard, and Mark Weinberger, assistant secretary of the Treasury for tax policy.

Looking at some of the specifics of the tax reform plans previously proposed or endorsed by these officials gives a road map to where the Bush administration may ultimately go on tax reform.

PAUL O'NEILL: While he was chairman of Alcoa, O'Neill co-chaired with Robert Lutz of Chrysler a group called Alliance USA. This group raised substantial funds in the corporate community to promote a tax plan proposed by senator Pete Domenici, Republican of New Mexico, and former senator Sam Nunn, Democrat of Georgia.

The essence of the Nunn-Domenici plan was to eliminate saving from the tax base. This would, by definition, create a consumption-based tax system. On the business side, Nunn-Domenici proposed a value-added tax (VAT) in place of the corporate income tax. Firms would be taxed on their gross receipts from domestic sales, less payments to other domestic businesses for goods or services. Foreign sales would thus be excluded and there would be no deduction for foreign purchases. Employee compensation would not be deductible, and all capital equipment would be immediately expensed, not depreciated over a period of years, as is the case now. Net receipts would be taxed at a 10 percent rate. However, firms would also receive a tax credit for the employer's share of the payroll tax.

On the individual side, the tax base would also start with gross receipts, including wages, interest, dividends, and pensions. However, taxpayers would get a full deduction for all net saving and investment, as well as deductions for mortgage interest, charitable contributions, and tuition. Tax rates would start at 19 percent and rise to 40 percent on taxable income above $14,400 for singles and $21,000 for married couples. But individuals would also receive a tax credit for payroll taxes and a large family living allowance.

The net result of this system would be to maintain the current distribution of the tax burden, while getting saving out of the tax base. This, its supporters believe, would lead to substantially greater saving and investment, and hence faster economic growth.

LAWRENCE LINDSEY: In his 1990 book *The Growth Experiment*, Lindsey lays out a 19 percent flat tax proposal similar to the one long championed by Steve Forbes and House majority leader Dick Armey. Lindsey's version is less simple than some flat tax pro-

Bruce Bartlett is a senior fellow at the National Center for Policy Analysis.

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posals, although it would still be a major improvement over today's tax system. Like Nunn-Domenici, Lindsey would tax individuals on their gross receipts, including fringe benefits and capital income. However, capital gains and interest would be inflation-adjusted, so that taxes would apply only to real income. Individuals would also get a deduction for saving, capped at $5,000. There would be a large personal exemption and a limited additional deduction for child care expenses. Deductions for mortgage interest and state and local taxes would be retained, but limited from what is currently allowed.

The business side of the Lindsey plan is very similar to Nunn-Domenici, but without the credit for payroll taxes. Both individuals and businesses would be taxed at the same rate of 19 percent.

R. GLENN HUBBARD: During the first Bush administration, Hubbard served as deputy assistant secretary of the Treasury for tax analysis. There he devised a tax reform plan that was issued by the Treasury in the waning days of that administration, on December 10, 1992.

On the individual side, Hubbard would keep the existing tax structure, but dramatically raise the standard deduction, to $19,650 for individuals and $33,800 for married couples. With the personal exemption, a single person would need to make more than $22,000 before paying any income taxes. A couple with two children would need to make more than $43,000. The result would be a very substantial tax cut for many middle-income taxpayers, as well as considerable simplification, with more than half of all tax filers exempted from the income tax.

Businesses would see much more substantial changes under the Hubbard plan. The corporate and individual income taxes would effectively be integrated by allowing corporations a deduction for dividends. The Alternative Minimum Tax would be repealed and rules regarding foreign-source income greatly simplified. Hubbard would also impose a new Business Transfer Tax, a kind of value-added tax, on top of the corporate income tax to pay for the other tax cuts.

MARK WEINBERGER: While on the staff of former senator John Danforth, Missouri Republican, Weinberger helped draft a reform plan that his boss cosponsored with former senator David Boren, Oklahoma Democrat. On the individual side, Danforth-Boren would triple the standard deduction. Current tax rates would be retained, but the Social Security payroll tax would be cut in half for both individuals and businesses.

Much more fundamental changes would take place on the business side. Danforth-Boren would eliminate the corporate income tax and replace it with a 14.5 percent Business Activities Tax, similar to the type of VAT in the Nunn-Domenici and Lindsey plans.

GEORGE W. BUSH: While President Bush has never put forward a plan to reform the federal tax system, he did initiate a tax reform plan in Texas. When he became governor in 1995, one of his first acts was to appoint a tax reform commission. Its main job was to find a way of reducing high property taxes, and its only constraint was that it could not recommend a personal income tax.

The commission proposed three options for raising new revenue that could be used to lower property taxes: a gross receipts tax on businesses, an increase in the sales tax, and a VAT-like business activities tax. In 1997, Bush submitted this third option to the legislature. The rate would have been 1.25 percent on gross receipts less payments to suppliers, capital investment, and a $500,000 exemption.

In the end, the legislature did not support Governor Bush's proposal. Nevertheless, it is revealing that his proposal for reforming the Texas tax system relied on a kind of value-added tax for businesses.

Indeed, the common theme in all these tax plans seems to be some sort

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of VAT on the business side of the tax code. Virtually all European countries have such a tax, although none has used it to replace other corporate taxes. It has the great virtue of being able to raise large revenues at relatively little economic cost and can thus be used to finance individual tax cuts. As a replacement for the corporate income tax, it would be an enormous improvement, because it allows expensing of capital investment and is refunded at the border on exports.

The problem with the VAT, politically, has been that liberals have viewed it as regressive. Because the tax goes directly into the prices of goods, the poor would pay more than they do now. Conservatives have been equally skeptical of a VAT, viewing it as a money machine. They note that VAT rates are much more easily raised than income tax rates, and that the VAT's high revenue-raising ability often fuels a vast increase in government spending. Only half in jest, former Treasury secretary Larry Summers once said that the United States would adopt a VAT when liberals figure out that it is a money machine and conservatives realize that it taxes the poor.

There is less similarity on the individual side of the various plans, but it does appear that all would do something to ease the tax burden on saving and would exempt more people from the income tax. Only Lindsey proposed a flat tax, the reform that has received most attention in recent years. The others would maintain progressive rates.

Of course, none of the people mentioned above can be held responsible now for proposals they put forward in the past, in different positions and contexts. But it is nonetheless revealing that every Bush administration official with anything to say about tax policy, including the president, is on record as having proposed or supported some sort of value-added tax for businesses. Given this fact, it would be very surprising if such a tax did not form the basis of any future Bush administration tax reform initiative. ♦

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A Bad Prescription from the DEA

The drug agency's misguided campaign against a painkiller. BY ERIC CHEVLEN

LAST YEAR, ABOUT 16,000 Americans died from treating their arthritis with FDA-approved drugs such as Advil and Aleve—so-called non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. That's what happens if millions of people, to treat their chronic pain, take a kind of drug that can increase the risk of bleeding ulcers and other complications when used over long periods. During the same time, around 200 people died from the purposeful abuse of oxycodone, the active ingredient of OxyContin and other powerful analgesics.

With terrible shortsightedness, federal bureaucrats have now decided that the second number is the problem. Earlier this month, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) announced a high-profile campaign against doctors and pharmacists "responsible" for the abuse. Purdue Pharma, which makes OxyContin, subsequently announced it was suspending shipment of "large dose tablets" of the drug. The inevitable consequence of this campaign will be less pain relief for those who need it, and possibly a higher death toll from overuse of substitute painkillers.

OxyContin was introduced in the United States in 1995 by Purdue Pharma, a privately held pharmaceutical company based in Stamford, Connecticut. Its active ingredient, oxycodone, had been in use for over 60 years. But the innovative delivery system of this ingredient was the key to the new drug's clinical success. For several decades, pain specialists have recognized that opioids (the class of drugs that used to be called narcotics) are safe and effective in relieving the severe pain of cancer and other chronic conditions. The key to their successful use is having a steady amount in the bloodstream. It seems obvious now, but it was an insight then: If pain is present all the time, pain medication should also be present in the bloodstream constantly. The drug should not be taken just "as needed."

The problem that Purdue overcame is that morphine, oxycodone, and other opioids relieve pain for only a few hours. A patient would have to take his medication every four hours—even setting a clock to get up at night for a dose. Purdue developed systems by which a medication tablet would deliver its contents continuously (hence the name) over 12 hours. The company's first such analgesic was MS-Contin. Although clinically effective, the drug did not reach its full commercial potential in large part because of the stigma associated with its active ingredient, morphine. OxyContin, Purdue's second continuous-release opioid, contained oxycodone, a drug whose pharmacologic effect is very similar to that of morphine, but one that—at least in those days—did not carry the negative associations of morphine.

OxyContin proved to be a billion dollar home run for Purdue. Its success was due to the confluence of several factors. First, the drug was indeed just as the FDA recognized it to be: safe and effective for the management of moderate to severe chronic pain. It was introduced at a time when doctors were becoming more aware of the scandalous undertreatment of chronic pain, and learning that when properly used, opioids carried little risk of addiction. And Purdue marketed the drug brilliantly.

Early in the promotion of the product, Purdue recognized that both patient success in getting pain relief and Purdue's success in the marketplace would be limited by the same factor: physician ignorance. My own experience in medical training was typical: I learned virtually nothing in medical school about pain, and most of what I was taught as an intern and resident was wrong. Purdue concluded that it could do well by doing good, and beefed up its existing program of physician education. Their goal was to get doctors up to date, not just about opioids, but about all aspects of pain management. (Full disclosure: I have given many lectures about pain management sponsored by Purdue; I have done the same for Purdue's competitors.) Doctors began to take the pain complaints of their patients seriously, and to treat them effectively.

With success, however, have come predictable problems. As OxyContin has achieved a larger share of the analgesic marketplace, its share in the drug-abuse marketplace has risen, too. Junkies learned that by grinding OxyContin tablets and snorting or injecting them, they could overcome the slow delivery system that Purdue scientists had worked so hard to create. And since OxyContin is a drug of known quality and purity, it has become popular among addicts. Lurid stories in *Time*, *Newsweek*, and the *New York Times* have only served to increase the interest of customers in the illegal market.

Purdue is thus in a difficult position. Its major profit center is a drug whose distribution is strictly controlled by federal law. So while it is arguable whether the DEA has the authority to disrupt the marketing of a legal drug, Purdue is hardly in a position to criticize a wrongheaded law-enforcement offensive.

Indeed, Purdue is probably more eager than the DEA to curtail abuse

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and diversion of its number one product. For the company, the misuse of OxyContin is not a source of profit but a nightmare of the first order. The abuse cases are relatively rare but have a huge and disproportionate impact in deterring doctors from prescribing the medication for patients who could truly benefit from it. Purdue has thus rolled out its own 10-point plan to reduce prescription drug abuse. Among other things, the company has modified its educational programs to include more training for doctors and pharmacists in distinguishing genuine pain patients from scam artists. At the same time, in a meeting it sought with the DEA, Purdue and the agency agreed that OxyContin should only be prescribed according to the FDA-approved indication and should only be prescribed by physicians knowledgeable in the use of opioids to treat pain.

On a formal level, this agreement is not unlike an agreement between two countries in conflict that merely serves to paper over the stark differences between them. And the differences are substantial. Indeed, a spokesperson for the DEA says the agency is not satisfied with this agreement and has "suggested" that Purdue market the drug only to pain specialists, and that it be distributed only by a limited number of pharmacies.

Anyone who cares about the relief of suffering should hope that the company resists that suggestion. The DEA stance is misconceived in several ways. First, the problem of OxyContin abuse has been hyped by both the media and press-savvy law enforcement spokesmen. To put the question in perspective, an American is twice as likely to be struck by lightning as he is to die from abusing OxyContin. The government's most recent Drug Abuse Warning Network data show that purposeful misuse of acetaminophen (Tylenol) is over three times as likely to result in an emergency room visit as is purposeful misuse of oxycodone. Among medical examiner (coroner) cases, codeine is five times as likely to be mentioned as contributing to death as oxycodone.

OxyContin abuse cases—admittedly rising in number—are clearly less of a social problem than those associated with several other drugs. Why, then, the inordinate attention to this particular drug? Part of the answer lies in the fact that OxyContin is so prominent in the *legitimate* pain market. More important, I think, is the fact that Purdue has used OxyContin to legitimize the very concept of ongoing opioid therapy for a larger class of patients—those with moderate to severe chronic pain from nonmalignant causes, not just cancer patients. This idea still encounters resistance from some doctors and public officials.

Keep in mind that virtually all of the oxycodone deaths are due to purposeful abuse of the drug. Limiting patient access to OxyContin because of these rare tragedies is like limiting access to rope because some people hang themselves. Unfortunately, despite DEA protestations to the contrary, sharply limited access to pain relief is the completely predictable result of the agency's plan.

There are an estimated 30-50 million Americans who live in chronic pain. Only one in four of them is now receiving proper treatment. For many people in pain, opioids are the safest and most effective (or only effective) form of relief. There are only about 3,000 pain specialists in the country, and many parts of the country have none at all. These few specialists could no more take care of all the pain patients who need opioids than a few thousand endocrinologists could take care of all the diabetics who need insulin.

While they may rely on occasional specialist consultation, primary care physicians must treat pain patients or they simply will not be treated. Similarly, reducing the number of pharmacies that stock OxyContin will do little more than inconvenience patients whose ability to travel is already restricted by their illness.

Even in the absence of DEA action, the OxyContin frisson has

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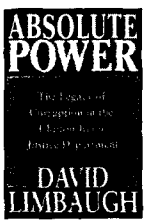

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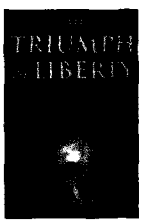

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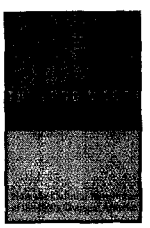

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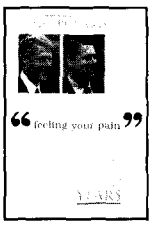

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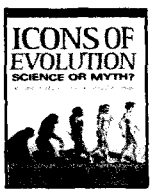

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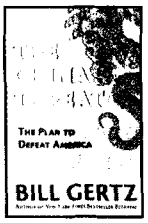

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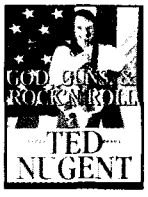

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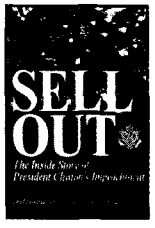

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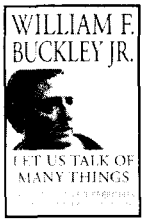

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already resulted in a diminished quality of life for pain patients. Consider Purdue's May 11 decision to "temporarily suspend" shipment of the 160 mg tablets. This is the strongest dose form of the drug, and accounts for less than 1 percent of total sales. Many of the people taking this high dose of opioid are end-stage cancer patients. Now their final months will be burdened by having to swallow twice as many pills (the 80 mg tablets are still available). For many dying patients, the very act of swallowing medication is painfully difficult. Purdue acknowledges that there have been few reports of diversion of the 160 mg tablets, and the DEA has no idea which dose form is most likely to be abused. It is hard to see the benefit of such a policy. And for some patients, the problem will be worse than inconvenience. In many states, Medicaid rules limit the filling of opioid prescriptions to a certain number of pills, not a certain total dose. So cancer pain patients who can't afford to pay out of pocket for the expensive drugs will find that they'll simply have to get by on a lower dose. In other words, they'll just have to suffer.

Terrence Woodworth, deputy director of the DEA's office of Diversion Control, was quoted in a *New York Times* report as saying that the agency believes the drug has "been frequently prescribed by doctors who could have recommended less powerful drugs before turning to OxyContin."

As a pain specialist, I wonder what drugs he has in mind. Could he mean the non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, which are of limited benefit in treating chronic pain, but add a significant risk of stomach bleeding and kidney damage? Or perhaps he means tablets such as Vicodin, which combine the opioid hydrocodone with acetaminophen. These are less potent in relieving pain than most strengths of OxyContin, and their acetaminophen ingredient carries a risk of serious liver damage.

Even if the DEA sat in on every office visit of every patient receiving a prescription for OxyContin, it would still not be able to say what percentage of the prescriptions are medically necessary. The DEA, fundamentally not a medical but a police agency, has no such expertise.

AP / Wide World Photos

Kentucky state police arrest a suspected trafficker in OxyContin.

But power it does have. Even if it cannot usurp the FDA in controlling how Purdue markets and distributes the drug, it can certainly affect the prescribing of it. A few well-publicized intimidating visits to doctors who prescribe OxyContin will have a profound chilling effect on the willingness of most doctors to prescribe the drug. Indeed, the media circus surrounding the drug, and the statements of the DEA, have already had that effect.

The full adverse impact will not be limited to OxyContin and the patients who use it. Intimidating doctors from prescribing one opioid will limit their willingness to prescribe any. Moreover, there are several new sustained-release opioids already or soon to be submitted for FDA approval. There has never been, and likely never will be, any opioid analgesic on the market that cannot be abused or diverted by a motivated drug addict. Dr. Cynthia McCormick, head of the FDA branch that approves opioid analgesics, is reportedly embarrassed by the abuse now attributed to a drug her agency approved. The bureaucratically safe solution to her problem is to just say no, or to set the standard of approval unrealistically high. The losers, as always, will be people in pain.

In light of this, many in the pain management field find it ominous that Dr. McCormick recently scheduled a rare meeting of the Anesthetic and Life Support Drugs Advisory Committee, only to abruptly cancel it after many concerned clinicians got wind of it. The committee's agenda was to include "concerns regarding the abuse potential, diversion, and increasing incidence of addiction to opiate analgesics, especially to the modified-release opiate analgesics." Nor is it very comforting to realize that the members of the advisory committee are selected by the FDA itself. Keen readers of the Federal Register will also note that within a week of announcing the committee meeting, the FDA announced that it is prepared to appoint five more committee members immediately, and four more within the next year.

While abuse and diversion of OxyContin is clearly a problem that should not be neglected, the response of the Drug Enforcement Administration is both disproportionate and counterproductive. Similar action by the FDA to limit legitimate use of this or other opioids puts at risk the long-overdue progress that has recently been made in the management of chronic pain. Perhaps we cannot avoid death and taxes, but must we live in pain? ♦

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The Bush Doctrine

ABM, Kyoto, and the New American Unilateralism

BY CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER

I. The World as It Is

Between 1989 and 1991 the world changed so radically so suddenly that even today the implications have not adequately been grasped. The great ideological wars of the twentieth century, which began in the '30s and lasted six decades, came to an end overnight. And the Soviet Union died in its sleep, and with it the last great existential threat to America, the West, and the liberal idea.

So fantastic was the change that, at first, most analysts and political thinkers refused to recognize the new unipolarity. In the early '90s, conventional wisdom held that we were in a quick transition from a bipolar to a multipolar world: Japan was rising, Europe was uniting, China was emerging, sleeping giants like India were stirring, and America was in decline. It seems absurd today, but this belief in American decline was all the rage.

AP / Wide World Photos

Ten years later, the fog has cleared. No one is saying that Japan will overtake the United States economically, or Europe will overtake the United States diplomatically, or that some new anti-American coalition of powers will rise to replace the Communist bloc militarily. Today, the United States remains the preeminent economic, military, diplomatic, and cultural power on a scale not seen since the fall of the Roman Empire.

Oddly enough, the uniqueness of this structure is only dimly understood in the United States. It is the rest of the world that sees it—undoubtedly, because it feels it—acutely. Russia and China never fail in their summits to denounce explicitly the "unipolarity" of the current world structure and to pledge to do everything to abolish it. The French—elegant, caustic, and as ever the intellectual leader in things anti-American—have coined the term "hyperpower" to describe America's new condition.

And a new condition it is. It is not, as we in America tend to imagine, just the superpowerdom of the Cold War writ large. It is something never seen before in the modern world. Yet during the first decade of unipolarity, the United States acted much as it had during the preceding half-century.

In part, this was because many in the political and foreign policy elite refused to recognize the new reality. But more important, it was because those in power who did recognize it were deeply distrustful of American power. They saw their mission as seeking a new world harmony by constraining this overwhelming American power within a web of international obligations—rather than maintaining, augmenting, and exploiting the American predominance they had inherited.

This wish to maintain, augment, and exploit that predominance is what distinguishes the new foreign policy of the Bush administration. If successful, it would do what Teddy Roosevelt did exactly a century ago: adapt America's foreign policy and military posture to its new position in the world. At the dawn of the 20th century, that meant entry into the club of Great Powers. Roosevelt both urged and assured such entry with a Big Stick foreign policy that built the Panama Canal and sent a blue water navy around the world to formally announce our arrival.

Charles Krauthammer is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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At the dawn of the 21st century, the task of the new administration is to develop a military and foreign policy appropriate to our position of overwhelming dominance. In its first four months in office, the Bush administration has begun the task: reversing the premises of Clinton foreign policy and adopting policies that recognize the new unipolarity and the unilateralism necessary to maintain it.

II. ABM: Burying Bipolarity

In May 2000, while still a presidential candidate, George W. Bush gave a speech at the National Press Club pledging to build a national missile defense for the United States. A year later, as president, he repeated that in a speech at the National Defense University. This set off the usual reflexive reaction of longtime missile defense opponents. What was missed both times, however, was that Bush was proposing far more than a revival of the missile defense idea that had been put on hold during the Clinton years. Bush also declared that he would make unilateral cuts in American offensive nuclear arms. Taken together, what he proposed was a radical new nuclear doctrine: the end of arms control.

Henceforth, the United States would build nuclear weapons, both offensive and defensive, to suit its needs—regardless of what others, particularly the Russians, thought. Sure, there would be consultation—no need to be impolite. Humble unilateralism, the oxymoron that best describes this approach, requires it: Be nice, be understanding. But, in the end, be undeterred.

Liberal critics argue that a missile defense would launch a new arms race, with the Russians building new warheads to ensure that they could overcome our defenses. The response of the Bush administration is: So what? If the Russians want to waste what little remains of their economy on such weapons, let them. These nukes are of no use. Whether or not Russia builds new missiles, no American defense will stop a massive Russian first strike anyway. And if Russia decides to enlarge its already massive second strike capacity, in a world in which the very idea of a first strike between us and the Russians is preposterous, then fine again.

The premises underlying the new Bush nuclear doctrine are simple: (1) There is no Soviet Union. (2) Russia —no longer either a superpower or an enemy, and therefore neither a plausibly viable nor an ideological threat—does not count. (3) Therefore, the entire structure of bilateral arms control, both offensive and defensive, which was an American obsession during the last quarter-century of the Cold War, is a useless relic. Indeed, it is seriously damaging to American security.

Henceforth, America will build the best weaponry it can to meet its needs. And those needs are new. The coming threat is not from Russia, but from the inevitable proliferation of missiles into the hands of heretofore insignificant enemies.

Critics can downplay and discount one such threat or another. North Korea, they say, is incapable of building an intercontinental ballistic missile. (They were saying that right up to the time when it launched a three-stage rocket *over* Japan in 1998.) Or they will protest that Iraq cannot possibly build an effective nuclear capacity clandestinely. They are wrong on the details, but, even more important, they are wrong in principle: Missile technology is to the 21st century what airpower was to the 20th. In 1901, there was not an airplane in the world. Most people did not think a heavier-than-air machine could *in theory* ever fly. Yet 38 years later, the world experienced the greatest war in history, whose outcome was crucially affected by air power and air defenses in a bewildering proliferation of new technologies: bombers, fighters, transports, gliders, carriers, radar.

It is inconceivable that 38 years from now, we will not be living in a world where missile technology is equally routine, and thus routinely in the hands of bad guys.

It is therefore inexplicable why the United States should not use its unique technology to build the necessary defense against the next inevitable threat.

Yet for eight years, the U.S. government did nothing on the grounds that true safety lay in a doctrine (mutually assured destruction) and a treaty (the antiballistic missile treaty) that codifies it. The logic of MAD is simple: If either side can always launch a second strike against the other, then neither side will ever launch a first. And because missile defenses cast doubt on the efficacy of a second strike capacity, they make the nuclear balance more unstable.

This argument against missile defense was plausible during the Cold War. True, it hinged on the very implausible notion of a first strike. But at the time, the United

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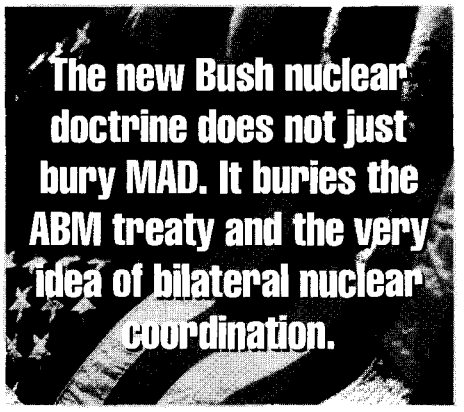
States and the Soviet Union were mortal ideological enemies. We came close enough in Berlin and Cuba to know that war was plausible. But even then the idea of a first strike remained quite fantastic because it meant initiating the most destructive war in human history.

Today, the idea of Russia or America launching a bolt from the blue is merely absurd. Russia does not define itself as our existential adversary. It no longer sees its mission as the abolition of our very way of life. We no longer are nose-to-nose in flashpoints like Berlin. Ask yourself: Did you ever in the darkest days of the Cold War lie awake at night wondering whether Britain or France or Israel had enough of a second strike capacity to deter an American first strike against them? Of course not. Nuclear weapons are not in themselves threats. They become so in conditions of extreme hostility. It all depends on the intent of the political authorities who control them. A Russian or an American first strike? We are no longer contending over the fate of the earth, over the future of Korea and Germany and Europe. Our worst confrontation in the last decade was over the Pristina airport!

What about China? The fallback for some missile defense opponents is that China will feel the need to develop a second strike capacity to overcome our defenses. But this too is absurd. China does not *have* a second strike capacity. It has *never* had a second strike capacity. If it has never had one in the absence of an American missile defense, why should the construction of an American missile defense create a crisis of strategic instability between us?



But the new Bush nuclear doctrine does not just bury MAD. It buries the ABM treaty and the very idea of bilateral nuclear coordination with another superpower. Those agreements, on both offensive and defensive nuclear weapons, are a relic of the bipolar world. In the absence of bipolarity, there is no need to tailor our weapons to the needs or threat or wishes of a rival superpower.

Yet the Clinton administration for eight years carried on as if it did. It spent enormous amounts of energy trying to get the START treaties refined and passed in Russia. It went to great lengths to constrain and dumb down the testing of high-tech weaponry (particularly on missile defense) to be "treaty compliant." It spent even more energy negotiating baroque extensions, elaborations, and amendments to the ABM treaty. Its goal was to make the treaty more enduring, at a time when it had already become obsolete. In fact, in one agreement, negotiated in New York in 1997, the Clinton administration amended the ABM treaty to include as signatories Kazakhstan, Ukraine, and Belarus, thus making any future changes in the treaty require five signatures rather than only two. It is as if Britain and Germany had spent the 1930s regulating the levels of their horse cavalries.

That era is over.

III. Kyoto: Escape from Multilateralism

It was expected that a Republican administration would abrogate the ABM treaty. It was not expected that a Republican administration would even more decisively discard the Kyoto treaty on greenhouse gases. Yet this step may be even more far-reaching.

To be sure, Bush had good political and economic reasons to discard Kyoto. The Senate had expressed its rejection of what Clinton had negotiated 95-0. The treaty had no domestic constituency of any significance. Its substance bordered on the comic: It exempted China, India, and the other massively industrializing polluters in the Third World from CO_2 restrictions. The cost for the United States was staggering, while the environmental benefit was negligible. The exempted 1.3 billion Chinese and billion Indians alone would have been pumping out CO_2 emissions equal to those the United States was cutting. In reality, Kyoto was a huge transfer of resources from the United States to the Third World, under the guise of environmental protection.

All very good reasons. Nonetheless, the alacrity and almost casualness with which Bush withdrew from Kyoto sent a message that the United States would no longer acquiesce in multilateral nonsense just because it had pages of signatories and bore the sheen of international comity. Nonsense was nonsense, and would be treated as such.

That alarmed the usual suspects. They were further alarmed when word leaked that the administration rejected the protocol negotiated by the Clinton administration for enforcing the biological weapons treaty of 1972. The reason here is even more obvious. The protocol does nothing of the sort. Biological weapons are inherently unverifiable. You can make biological weapons in a laboratory, in a bunker, in a closet. In a police state, these are unfindable. And police states are what we worry about. The countries effectively restricted would be open soci-

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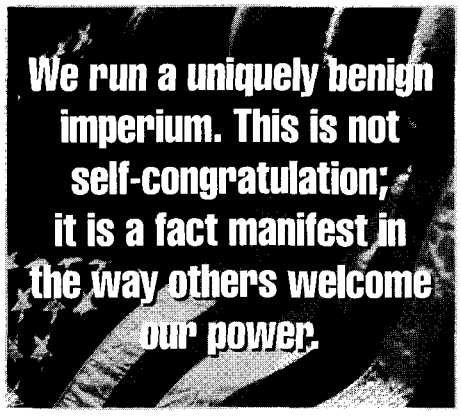
eties with a free press—precisely the countries that we do not worry about. Even worse, the protocol would have a perverse effect. It would allow extensive inspection of American anti-biological-warfare facilities—where we develop vaccines, protective gear, and the like—and thus give information to potential enemies on how to make their biological agents more effective against us.

Given the storm over Kyoto, the administration is looking for a delicate way to get out of this one. There is nothing wrong with delicacy. But the thrust of the administration—to free itself from the thrall of international treaty-signing that has characterized U.S. foreign policy for nearly a decade—is refreshing.

One can only marvel at the enthusiasm with which the Clinton administration pursued not just Kyoto and the biological protocol but multilateral treaties on everything from chemical weapons to nuclear testing. Treaty-signing was portrayed as a way to build a new structure of legality and regularity in the world, to establish new moral norms that would in and of themselves restrain bad behavior. But the very idea of a Saddam Hussein being morally constrained by, say, a treaty on chemical weapons is simply silly.



This reality could not have escaped the liberal internationalists who spent the '90s pursuing such toothless agreements. Why then did they do it? The deeper reason is that these treaties offered an opportunity for those who distrusted American power (and have ever since the Vietnam era) to constrain it—and constrain it in ways that give the appearance of altruism and good international citizenship.

Moreover, it was clear that the constraints on American power imposed by U.S.-Soviet bipolarity and the agreements it spawned would soon and inevitably come to an end. Even the ABM treaty, the last of these relics, would have to expire of its own obsolescent dead weight. In the absence of bipolarity, what was there to hold America back—from, say, building "Star Wars" weaponry or raping the global environment or otherwise indulging in the arrogance of power? Hence the mania during the last decade for the multilateral treaties that would impose a new structure of constraint on American freedom of action.

Kyoto and the biological weapons protocol are the models for the new structure of "strategic stability" that would succeed the ABM treaty and its relatives. By summarily rejecting Kyoto, the Bush administration radically redefines the direction of American foreign policy: rejecting the multilateral straitjacket, disenthralling the United States from the notion there is real safety or benefit from internationally endorsed parchment barriers, and asserting a new American unilateralism.

IV. The Purposes of Unilateralism

This is a posture that fits the unipolarity of the 21st century world. Its aim is to restore American freedom of action. But as yet it is defined only negatively. The question remains: freedom of action to do what?

First and foremost, to maintain our preeminence. Not just because we enjoy our own power ("It's good to be the king"—Mel Brooks), but because it is more likely to keep the peace. It is hard to understand the enthusiasm of so many for a diminished America and a world reverted to multipolarity. Multipolar international structures are inherently less stable, as the catastrophic collapse of the delicate alliance system of 1914 definitively demonstrated.

Multipolarity, yes, when there is no alternative. But not when there is. Not when we have the unique imbalance of power that we enjoy today—and that has given the international system a stability and essential tranquility it had not known for at least a century.

The international environment is far more likely to enjoy peace under a single hegemon. Moreover, we are not just any hegemon. We run a uniquely benign imperium. This is not mere self-congratulation; it is a fact manifest in the way others welcome our power. It is the reason, for example, the Pacific Rim countries are loath to see our military presence diminished.

Unlike other hegemons and would-be hegemons, we do not entertain a grand vision of a new world. No Thousand Year Reich. No New Soviet Man. By position and nature, we are essentially a status quo power. We have no particular desire to remake human nature, to conquer for the extraction of natural resources, or to rule for the simple pleasure of dominion. We could not wait to get out of Haiti, and we would get out of Kosovo and Bosnia today if we could. Our principal aim is to maintain the stability and relative tranquility of the current international system by enforcing, maintaining, and extending the current peace. Our goals include:

(1) To enforce the peace by acting, uniquely, as the balancer of last resort everywhere. Britain was the bal-

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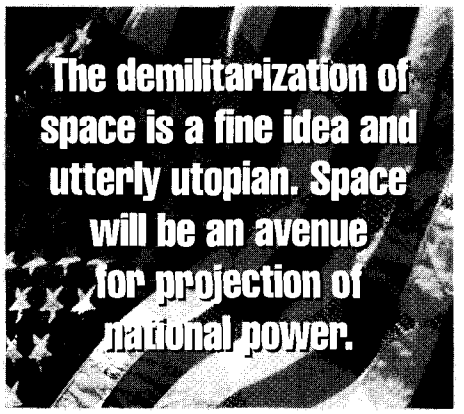
ancer of power in Europe for over two centuries, always joining the weaker coalition against the stronger to create equilibrium. Our unique reach around the world allows us to be—indeed dictates that we be—the ultimate balancer in every region. We balanced Iraq by supporting its weaker neighbors in the Gulf War. We balance China by supporting the ring of smaller states at her periphery (from South Korea to Taiwan, even to Vietnam). One can argue whether we should have gone there, but our role in the Balkans was essentially to create a micro-balance: to support the weaker Bosnian Muslims against their more dominant ethnic neighbors, and subsequently to support the (at the time) weaker Kosovo Albanians against the dominant Serbs.

(2) To maintain the peace by acting as the world's foremost anti-proliferator. Weapons of mass destruction and missiles to deliver them are the greatest threat of the 21st century. Non-proliferation is not enough. Passive steps to deny rogue states the technology for deadly missiles and weapons of mass destruction is, of course, necessary. But it is insufficient. Ultimately the stuff gets through.



What to do when it does? It may become necessary in the future actually to preempt rogue states' weapons of mass destruction, as Israel did in 1981 by destroying the Osirak nuclear reactor in Iraq. Preemption is, of course, very difficult. Which is why we must begin thinking of moving to a higher platform. Space is the ultimate high ground. For 30 years, we have been reluctant even to think about placing weapons in space, but it is inevitable that space will become militarized. The only question is: Who will get there first and how will they use it?

The demilitarization of space is a fine idea and utterly utopian. Space will be an avenue for projection of national power as were the oceans 500 years ago. The Great Powers that emerged in the modern world were those that, above all, mastered control of the high seas. The only reason space has not yet been militarized is that none but a handful of countries are yet able to do so. And none is remotely as technologically and industrially and economically prepared to do so as is the United States.

This is not as radical an idea as one might think. When President Kennedy committed the United States to a breakneck program of manned space flight, he understood full well the symbiosis between civilian and military space power. It is inevitable that within a generation the United States will have an Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, and Space Force. Space is already used militarily for spying, sensing, and targeting. It could be uniquely useful, among other things, for finding and destroying rogue-state missile forces.

(3) To extend the peace by spreading democracy and free institutions. This is an unassailable goal and probably the most enduring method of promoting peace. The liberation of the Warsaw Pact states, for example, relieved us of the enormous burden of physically manning the ramparts of Western Europe with huge land armies. The zone of democracy is almost invariably a zone of peace.

There is significant disagreement, however, as to how far to go and how much blood and treasure to expend in pursuit of this goal. The "globalist" school favors vigorous intervention and use of force to promote the spread of our values where they are threatened or where they need protection to burgeon. Globalists supported the U.S. intervention in the Balkans not just on humanitarian grounds, but on the grounds that ultimately we might widen the zone of democracy in Europe and thus eliminate a festering source of armed conflict, terror, and instability.

The "realist" school is more skeptical that these goals can be achieved at the point of a bayonet. True, democracy can be imposed by force, as both Germany and Japan can attest. But those occurred in the highly unusual circumstance of total military occupation following a war for unconditional surrender. Unless we are willing to wage such wars and follow up with the kind of trusteeship we enjoyed over Germany and Japan, we will find that our interventions on behalf of democracy will leave little mark, as we learned with some chagrin in Haiti and Bosnia.

Nonetheless, although they disagree on the stringency of criteria for unleashing American power, both schools share the premise that overwhelming American power is good not just for the United States but for the world. The Bush administration is the first administration of the post-Cold War era to share that premise and act accordingly. It welcomes the U.S. role of, well, hyperpower. In its first few months, its policies have reflected a comfort with the unipolarity of the world today, a desire to maintain and enhance it, and a willingness to act unilaterally to do so. It is a vision of America's role very different from that elaborated in the first post-Cold War decade—and far more radical than has generally been noted. The French, though, should be onto it very soon. ♦

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Big Rotten Apple

New York City after Giuliani

By James Higgins

New York City

Liberalism, or paleoliberalism to some, is what New Yorkers are told will return to City Hall when term limits force mayor Rudolph Giuliani to depart in 2002. Four Democrats are vying to succeed him.

But the potential return of unreconstructed liberalism is not the most menacing aspect of this fall's election. The greater threat is the potential return of unreconstructed crime. Not the kind in the streets, but the kind in the suites—the suites of city government and the Democratic party.

Everyone old enough to have watched TV in the 1980s and early 1990s knows that New York City before Giuliani was where foreign tourists came to pay the world's highest hotel taxes while waiting to be robbed and shot. But the depth and breadth of corruption in the city's Democratic establishment during the pre-Giuliani years may be difficult for non-New Yorkers to grasp. The problem was not just a few rotten apples at the top. Under a series of Democratic mayors—Abraham Beame, Edward Koch, and David Dinkins—the whole tree was rotten. It was corruption that the New York City Democrats stood for even more than liberalism, and it was corruption at least as much as liberalism that brought Giuliani to office. It was as if, having jailed much of the leadership of New York's "Five Families" of crime while he was U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York, Giuliani had to become mayor to flush out this Sixth Family.

To appreciate the significance of the upcoming election, it's essential to know this background. The chief reason the rot was not always visible to outsiders is the canniness of Dems in the Big Apple. Unlike their counterpart New Jersey crew, the New York City Democratic leadership has refrained from putting into the highest offices sticky-fingered characters like U.S. senators Harrison Williams and Robert Torricelli. The New York Democrats could have been working from the template of the mobsters who once controlled Las Vegas: They've always chosen clean front men. There was never a hint of personal corruption on the part of Beame, Koch, or Dinkins. Their administrations were another story. Consider:

• Under Ed Koch, the entire city department charged with inspecting restaurants had to be closed because there was almost no one left to do the job after investigators arrested the inspectors who were taking bribes. Not long afterwards, the department that inspected taxicabs had to be closed for exactly the same reason.

• Over an extended period in the '80s and early '90s, the *felony* rate among Democratic borough leaders in New York City approached 50 percent. Criminal defense lawyers tell me that if senior managers of a private business used their jobs to commit crimes at this rate, the entire enterprise would be inviting a RICO indictment.

• The Beame, Koch, and Dinkins administrations approved a contract with school custodians that was close to being criminal on its face: The custodians were required only to maintain schools to "minimum standards," and the contract precluded any effective enforcement mechanism. The lucky custodians then *personally* got to keep whatever money in their budgets they didn't spend doing their jobs. This type of contract came to an end only after a 1992 *60 Minutes* segment showed the custodians spending less time at the filthy schools they were ostensibly maintaining than attending to the yachts they acquired—and did maintain—at taxpayer expense.

• As pre-Giuliani taxi and limousine commissioner Herb Ryan described the system after he was caught taking bribes, "Everybody else has their own thing. I just wanted to get my own thing." The literal translation of "Our Thing" is, of course, *La Cosa Nostra.*

This is just a small sample of what the Sixth Family Democrats and their appointees did—indeed, just a small sample of what they *were caught* doing. That predicate criminal activity is a major part of what in 1989 lured political rising star and crime-fighter Rudy Giuliani to run for mayor, a job that for more than a century had been a political dead end.

James Higgins is a partner in a private equity firm in New York.

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While New York Democratic leaders have tried to ignore the stench of their party's record in government, they have never repudiated it. Without question, large segments of the New York City Democratic party continue to believe in their divine right to rule. When an effort to cancel a referendum on term limits failed and the referendum went to the voters and won, Democrats on the City Council promptly decided that the voters had been too stupid to know what they were voting on and scheduled another referendum on the same subject. When they lost that, too, City Council Democrats fell but one vote in committee shy of *canceling the results of both referendums by their own fiat* in order to stay in power. All of which forces one to wonder what the next Democratic administration might do.

Four candidates are expected to run in the Democratic primary for mayor in September. In a city that loves big personalities, they seem more suited to be mayor of Lilliput. Not one has made a great impression on the voters, even when stumbling.

Of the four, city comptroller Alan Hevesi should be the most plausible. A career pol who, when in the State Assembly, sought to legalize marijuana, he has been elected and reelected citywide as comptroller, the office Abraham Beame held when he captured City Hall in 1973. But to say that Hevesi hasn't made much of a splash would be an understatement. When he has tried to use his fiscal watchdog office to political effect, he has wound up biting himself: He made headlines attacking Jason Turner, the city's commissioner of human resources, for alleged nepotism in the awarding of welfare reform contracts—only to have Turner's office point out that Hevesi was using as a megaphone the *New York Times*, where Hevesi's brother is a reporter. Hevesi did succeed in nullify-

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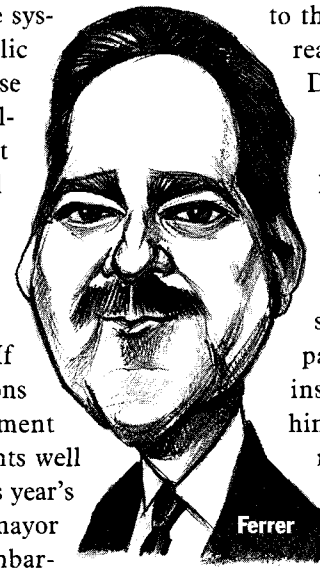
ing some contracts Turner had signed with companies to manage welfare reform, but anyone could see that he was using his office not to police public expenditures but rather to obstruct welfare reform and get free publicity.

City Council speaker Peter Vallone is the second underachiever in the race. Vallone was the Democratic nominee for governor in 1998. It is a measure of his media effectiveness not only that he lost that race by a million votes to incumbent George Pataki but that few city voters seem aware that he ran at all. Vallone in many ways epitomizes the problem with the Democratic establishment in New York City: He's a man who knows right from wrong but went along with the system anyway. By all accounts an honest public servant and a family man, Vallone pays close attention to his Astoria, Queens, councilmanic district and attends mass daily. But his rise in Democratic politics demanded that he turn a blind eye to all that was going on around him. He was installed in his job by two felons: then Bronx Democratic leader Stanley Friedman and then Queens Democratic leader Donald Manes. If Vallone has ever had any serious reservations about the way the Democratic establishment looted the city, he has kept these sentiments well concealed. Vallone has been luckless in this year's race: His recent endorsement by former mayor Edward Koch was drowned out when, embarrassingly, Vallone's home-county Democratic chairman, Tom Manton (another product of Sixth Family politics), lined up behind Hevesi.


Ferrer

Bronx Borough president Fernando Ferrer aspires to be New York's first mayor drawn from what is now the city's largest minority: Hispanics. But with each passing week he looks less ready for prime time. Ferrer had to return a variety of campaign contributions when local media discovered they came from, among others, a partner of John Gotti's son-in-law, some executives of a wrecking firm that had been caught bribing federal officials, and the family of an alleged member of the Genovese crime family.

Ferrer's political strategy has been to rebuild the black-Hispanic coalition that elected David Dinkins mayor in 1989. But when surprised in a televised debate earlier this month with the question of which recent mayor (Giuliani, Dinkins, and Koch) he would vote for in a hypothetical three-way race, Ferrer hemmed and hawed, then gave no answer at all. Dinkins promptly endorsed rival mayoral candidate Mark Green. The wily Al Sharpton then heaped complete humiliation on Ferrer by luring Ferrer into thinking Sharpton's endorsement was imminent. Local Democratic candidates regard a Sharpton endorsement the way teenage boys might regard a wet kiss from Jennifer Lopez. The prematurely delighted Ferrer leaked this "news" on deep background to local media. As Ferrer went back to throw this touchdown pass, Sharpton turned and sacked him by linking an endorsement to the politically impossible demand that Ferrer endorse two black Democrats in Bronx primary races specifically because they are black.

Among Ferrer's broader problems, he wants to reassemble the Dinkins coalition but seems oblivious to the painstaking years of effort Dinkins spent reassuring liberal white Manhattanites, the Democrat constituency most likely to be skittish about a minority mayor, that he was friendly to them and to Israel. Ferrer has not laid similar groundwork.

All of which leaves in the front-runner position the rather implausible figure of Mark Green. Green spent years on the outside of the New York Democrats' plunder party, not because he didn't want to be an insider but because the Dems couldn't stand him. They gave him only lukewarm backing in races for the U.S. House and U.S. Senate. Green, who in law school edited something called, no kidding, the *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review*, is a crusader and goo-goo so earnest he seems as if he'd be happier back running for student council president so he could make all the voters sit down at a school assembly and listen to him speak. But he is also a world-class publicity hound, and that means the voters at least know who he is and what he looks like.

It is by fluke of history that Green is a serious candidate for mayor today. He was David Dinkins's consumer affairs commissioner, a natural post for the Ralph Nader protégé. But the stars were in alignment for Green when a series of court decisions stripped the City Council presidency of its main powers. The reformulated, downsized job was titled "public advocate"—effectively a glorified consumer affairs commissioner. Green saw this opportunity for a citywide office that others no longer wanted, and he took it. In office Green has proved a surprisingly deft political operator. It is he who has best positioned himself to reassemble the coalition of blacks, Hispanics, and Manhattan ultra-liberals that was a winner for Dinkins in 1989.

Green's having so long labored outside the parochial city political apparatus may give him the perspective to propel him to victory. He is the only one of the Demo-

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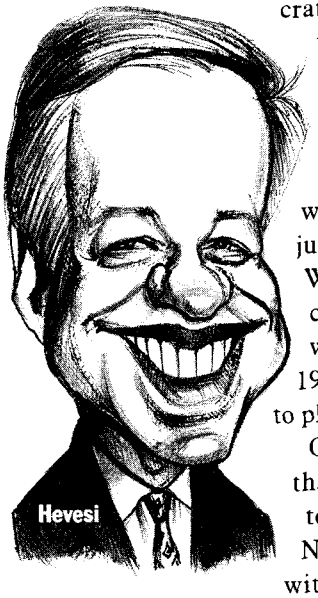
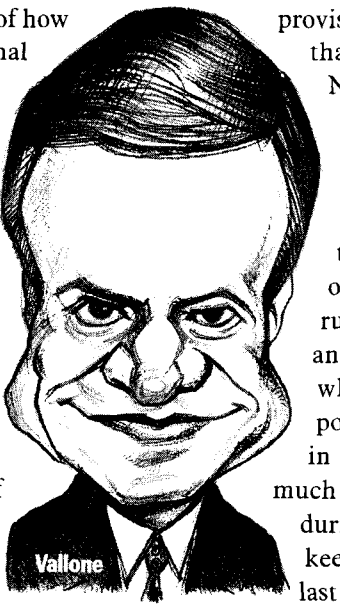


cratic candidates who seems to grasp just how unappetizing the traditional political gruel is to the average New York City voter in 2001. Green has won the endorsement not just of David Dinkins but of William Bratton, the police commissioner during whose tenure from 1994 to 1996 crime in the city began to plummet.

Green has strongly hinted that he would return Bratton to the helm of the NYPD. Since discontent with the police is the core unifying issue for Giuliani haters, this is a remarkable development. Bratton is still adored by the police as the man who not only led the successful fight on crime but in doing so took the public image of the NYPD from that of a hopelessly outgunned rear guard to that of a world-famous success story so glamorous that tourists now buy ballcaps and coffee mugs with the "NYPD" logo, as if the department were a college or a sports team. With that history, Bratton, if returned to office, would be unlikely to repudiate the "broken windows" crime-fighting approach, which works, in favor of goofy liberal ideas that don't.

So what will the Republicans do, ask non-New Yorkers? What about Michael Bloomberg? These questions by themselves are a measure of how great Giuliani's impact has been on national perceptions of New York City. The answer is, of course: It doesn't matter.

New York City is still far to the left of the American political mainstream. New Yorkers did not elect and reelect the Republican candidate for mayor, they elected Rudy Giuliani. He was already a nationally known crusading prosecutor when he first ran in 1989—and in the face of recession, uncontrolled crime, looting by the Democratic establishment, and a Democratic opponent of questionable administrative ability, he lost. It took four more years of these same problems festering, plus a slide toward anarchy under David Dinkins, to allow Giuliani to squeak into City Hall by 44,000 votes out of 1.8 million cast in 1993. Four years later, having accomplished an almost unbelievable turnaround in the city's condition, Giuliani ran for reelection against Ruth Messinger. Messinger is the sort of Upper West Side hard-left aging hippy who could be the invention of this magazine's cartoonist. Yet Rudy was able to win only 57 percent of the vote. Even these showings required Rudy to run not just as a Republican but also as the candidate of the dying Liberal party and of an independent line created to attract voters who could not bear to vote Republican.



Illustrations by Ismael Roldan

The hard facts are these: Sixty-seven percent of New York City voters are registered Democrats; just 13 percent are registered Republicans. Giuliani has failed to budge those numbers. Al Gore carried the city four to one over George W. Bush; Hillary Clinton carried the city three to one over Rick Lazio. The identity of the Republican candidate just doesn't matter in the absence of a Republican of Giuliani's stature, a profoundly divisive Democratic nominee, or an unusual circumstance that splits the Democratic vote. And there is no sign of any of those things this year.

The businessman Michael Bloomberg is a great innovator and entrepreneur. But should he seek the Republican nomination for mayor, his main impact will be to share a chunk of his wealth with political consultants. Indeed, Bloomberg has been so shameless and offensive in switching his allegiance from Democrat to Republican in the hope of being nominated for mayor that he could well lose a Republican primary to City University chairman Herman Badillo should Badillo run.

The hidden force in this year's election and, in all likelihood, in the next four years in City Hall is a provision of the New York City term limits law that has garnered little attention outside New York but is fully understood within the city. Unlike the 22nd Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the New York City term limits law is a bar to a third *consecutive* term, not a lifetime bar to more than two terms. So whoever does win the Democratic primary and runoff will in effect be running against a candidate who isn't there, and governing in the shadow of a mayor who isn't there—this time. Giuliani has pointedly not ruled out a run for City Hall in 2005. By not ruling it out, he may do as much to keep down crime in city government during the next four years as he has done to keep down crime in the streets during the last eight. ♦

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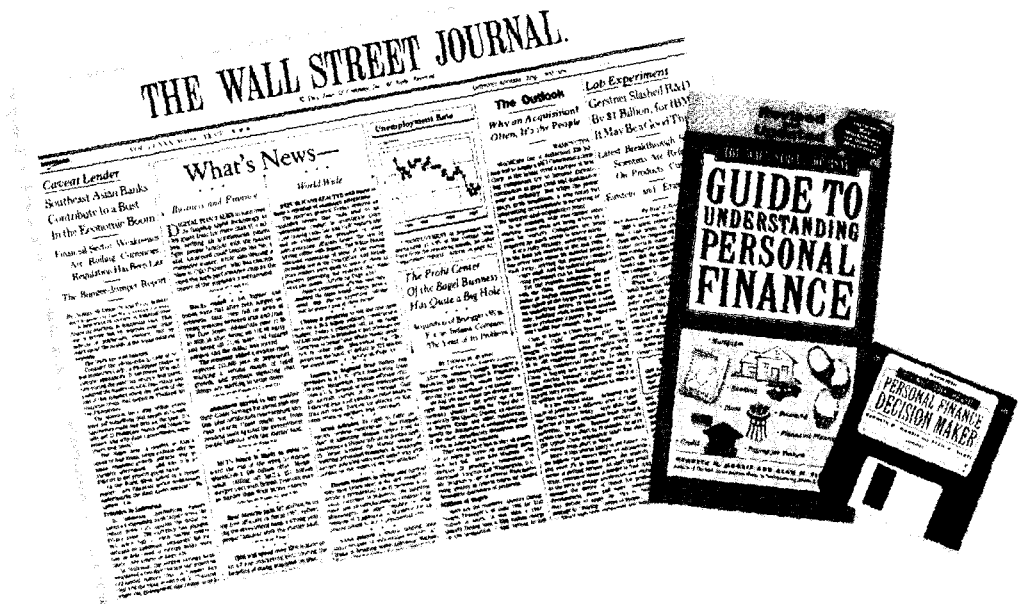

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Television Journalism as Oxymoron

Two lives in one medium

By Andrew Ferguson

One mark of a son of a bitch is the pleasure he takes in pointing out how many people think he's a son of a bitch. By this measure, to judge by his new memoir *Staying Tuned*, the former CBS News correspondent Daniel Schorr is one first-rate, top-of-the-line, gold-plated—but let him tell it.

> [President] Johnson awoke me at midnight to say, on the telephone, "Schorr, you are one prize son of a bitch."

And again:

> "You know," [CBS Washington bureau chief Bill Small] said, "I think you are one prize son of a bitch."

Again:

> "Yeah," [President Nixon] mused, "the only exception, of course, was that son of a bitch Schorr."

And again:

> His face ashen from fatigue and strain, [CIA chief Richard Helms] turned livid. "You son of a bitch," he raged.

I could go on, but you get the idea. (And I'm passing over John Ehrlichman, who said Schorr was a "prick." A distinction without a difference, as the scholars say.) Is it any wonder, then, that Walter Cronkite, in his back-cover blurb for *Staying Tuned*, describes the memoir as "Schorr's detailed report on why numerous heads of state and other officials have called him a son of a bitch." Trust Walter: That is exactly what *Staying Tuned* is.

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The first publicity shot for *60 Minutes*, 1968. Public Affairs Press.

Tell Me a Story, by Don Hewitt, the creator of *60 Minutes* and a former colleague of Schorr's at CBS, is a different matter. Nowhere does he admit to being a son of a bitch, leaving readers to draw their own conclusions. Though different in tone and style, and in quality too, the two memoirs are worth considering together as windows, fixed at different angles, into the world of television journalism, which seems to be filled with sons of bitches.

Staying Tuned
A Life in Journalism
by Daniel Schorr
Pocket, 368 pp., $26.95

Tell Me a Story
Fifty Years and 60 Minutes in Television
by Don Hewitt
Public Affairs, 288 pp., $26

Youngsters familiar with Daniel Schorr only from his association with National Public Radio may be surprised to discover that so many people, over so long a span of time, have considered him a jerk. Since the late 1980s Schorr has been NPR's "senior news analyst." At NPR, where all political commentary must fall into one of two categories—the obvious or the untrue—Schorr tends to specialize in the former. Whether he's chewing the fat on Saturday mornings with his interlocutor Scott Simon, the host of *Weekend Edition*, or offering one of the several on-the-spot homilies he produces throughout the week, Schorr is usually content to summarize the same news stories the rest of us have already read and add a sprinkle of his own leftish sarcasm. He's hardly ever offensive. Sometimes he even sounds as avuncular as Cronkite himself.

Still, the disdain of his acquaintances seems to have been constant from his childhood onward. He was born to impoverished immigrant parents in 1916, and his father died when Schorr was six. To this gloomy childhood he attributes his own emotional remoteness and his uncommon sense of self-sufficiency. As managing editor of his high school yearbook, he allowed his

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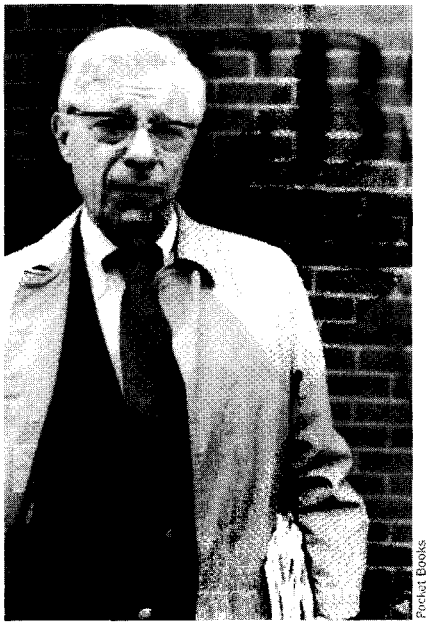
staff to write the blurb that appeared under his class picture. When the books appeared he discovered that they had written a bit of doggerel in his honor: *I love me, I love me / I'm wild about myself / I love me, I love me / I've got my picture on my shelf.* He reprints these lines without comment or contradiction.

Together with his admitted egotism, an eerie detachment seems to be Schorr's primary personal attribute, and he describes it with—no surprise here—an eerie detachment. His first experience as a journalist came at age twelve, when he saw a woman fall to her death from the roof of his apartment building. He immediately phoned in the story to his neighborhood newspaper and got $5 for his tip. "I felt no particular sense of awe or emotion about the first dead body I had ever seen," he writes. Bright, bloodless, with a curiosity about human beings that never intensified beyond the purely clinical, Schorr had the makings of a good reporter.

Which he was—certainly when measured against the standards of TV journalism, where most of the practitioners are happy to piggyback on the work of their colleagues in newspapers and magazines. He got a job with a Danish news service after the war and became a stringer in Europe for the *New York Times*. His ambition had always tilted toward newspaper work, but when CBS and Edward R. Murrow offered him a job, in 1953, he took it, and remained ever after transfixed by the "exposure and remuneration" that television uniquely offers. He began his network career covering the Army McCarthy hearings in Washington, followed by a decade abroad, first in the Soviet Union and then in Germany, returning at last to the Washington bureau in time for the launch of the Great Society. He had some scoops along the way.

There are a few good stories in *Staying Tuned*, and one or two funny ones, but for the most part Schorr recalls his experiences with the same talent for the obvious that has made him so indispensable to NPR. Joe McCarthy, just in case you didn't know, "brutalized people who may have had left-wing leanings at some point in their lives." Khrushchev was cunning, Adenauer imperious, Jack Kennedy ironical, Bobby passionate, Nixon devious, Agnew vulgar, and so on. He quotes often from his own broadcasts; the passages don't advance the narrative, but they do give a reader the impression that he thinks them rather finer than they are. What lends Schorr's career some special interest, though, was his own knack for creating controversy—not a talent that TV news executives, of that generation or this, highly prize.

Nowhere in his memoir does Schorr discuss his personal politics, but anyone



Pocket Books

Schorr leaving CBS after 23 years

who has followed his career from CBS to NPR will know that they are the standard-form liberalism of the professional journalist—that tidy little packet of principle and prejudice that gets issued along with the press card. But Schorr's views had a sharper edge, and unlike his colleagues he was clumsy about disguising them behind the niceties of journalistic convention. His first serious bout of trouble came during the presidential campaign of 1964, when the national press corps was seized by anti-Goldwater hysteria. The contagion was strong enough that Schorr caught it in Germany.

On the eve of the Republican convention in San Francisco, Schorr was asked to prepare a report on German reaction to Goldwater's impending nomination. Why *German* reaction? In the nation's news rooms, if nowhere else, the relationship seemed obvious: Goldwater means right-wing, right-wing means fascist, fascist means Germany. Schorr did not disappoint. The morning after his report aired, Goldwater's political enemies placed a transcript under the hotel room door of every delegate in San Francisco. Goldwater denounced CBS at a press conference and barred its reporters from his campaign. Even some executives at the network, notably its founder William Paley, grumbled privately about Schorr's reporting. (Like many great media honchos—from Henry Luce to Harold Ross to David Sarnoff—Paley was a Republican who hired only Democrats.)

What happened? The untutored reader of *Staying Tuned* can only wonder what the fuss was all about. Schorr's account here is, to put it kindly, incomplete. When CBS asked him for a story, he writes in his memoir, he learned from his reporting "that Goldwater had plans, as yet unannounced, to leave directly after the convention for a vacation in Germany as guest of . . . Lt. Gen. William Quinn. They would spend their time mainly at an American army recreation center in Berchtesgaden in the Bavarian Alps. Berchtesgaden was famous as Hitler's favorite retreat. This, along with the obvious enthusiasm of right-wing Germans for Goldwater, I reported from Munich in my analysis."

In his own autobiography, Goldwater gives a fuller account, quoting at length from Schorr's actual report. Schorr opened the report like so: "It looks as though Senator Goldwater, if nominated, will be starting his campaign here in Bavaria, center of Germany's right wing" also known, Schorr added helpfully, as "Hitler's one-time stomping ground." Goldwater, he went on, had given an interview to *Der Spiegel*, "appealing to right-wing elements in Germany," and had agreed to speak to a conclave of, yes, "right-wing Germans." "Thus," Schorr concluded, "there are signs that the American and German

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right wings are joining up." Now back to you, Walter, and have a nice day!

Today Schorr's story, with its hints of paranoia, seems merely quaint, an almost comical artifact of the era that gave us *The Manchurian Candidate* and *Seven Days in May*—except that this was broadcast as a genuine bit of news, in the middle of a real campaign. Though easily checkable, it was false in all its particulars. Goldwater had spoken vaguely of vacationing in Europe but had made no plans to visit Germany, and he hadn't spoken to Quinn, an old friend, in more than a year. Goldwater's interview in *Der Spiegel* was a reprint of an interview that had appeared elsewhere, and he had not even considered addressing the group Schorr mentioned. More important, the story was false in its obvious implication of an *Anschluss* between German neo-Nazis and U.S. Republicans.

If Schorr was embarrassed by the Goldwater episode, his memoir shows no signs of it. In a few years he was back in Washington, reporting on a constellation of social-welfare issues that formed the Great Society initiative. He stayed on the beat through the first years of the Nixon presidency, during which social programs were enlarged beyond the wildest dreams of Lyndon Johnson. Yet the unvarying theme of Schorr's reporting was that this vast expansion of the welfare state was either nonexistent or insufficiently vast—presumably on the grounds that, since it was happening under Richard Nixon, it wasn't happening.

The press's hostility toward Nixon was even more intense than its hostility to Goldwater (though Nixonphobia, of course, was far more rational). With his nightly agitations on the *CBS Evening News*, Schorr became a kind of exemplar of press bias. For this the gruesome martinets who manned the parapets of the Nixon White House placed him on their famous "enemies list." Being branded an enemy by Nixon made Schorr an instant celebrity, and he was to dine out on this elevated status for the next twenty-five years and counting. (For Schorr watchers, the biggest surprise in *Staying Tuned* is that the author waits until his second page before mentioning the enemies list.)

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The cast of 60 Minutes *in its seventeenth season, 1984.*

His celebrity was magnified spectacularly a few years later, in yet another controversy—one that was to end his network career. In early 1976, Schorr was leaked a copy of a report prepared by the House Intelligence Committee, which had been investigating CIA covert activities. Over the course of several nights he disgorged the contents of the report on CBS. Alarmed at the leak, and with its customary logic, the House of Representatives voted not to issue the report as scheduled but to keep it secret instead, notwithstanding that all its secrets had just been revealed. Delighted with his scoop, Schorr petitioned CBS executives to publish the report as a book, much as the *New York Times* had done with its purloined Pentagon Papers. When they declined, he leaked his leaked report to the *Village Voice*, which published it entire. CBS News executives, believing the report to be the network's proprietary work product, were not pleased. They demanded an explanation from Schorr. So did the House Ethics Committee, which summoned him to testify about how he had obtained the original report.

What happened next is a matter of dispute. Several memoirs of the period, most recently one ghostwritten for Schorr's CBS colleague Lesley Stahl, allege that Schorr, facing the wrath of his network bosses, led them to believe that Stahl herself had leaked the report to the *Voice*. (Her fiancé was a writer for the paper.) Only after the *Washington Post* identified him as the leaker did Schorr admit to what he had done. CBS suspended him.

In *Staying Tuned*, Schorr's account of the episode is characteristically spotty. His apparent attempt to shift attention to Stahl, he writes, was all a terrible misunderstanding. But his colleagues and supervisors at CBS saw it otherwise, as a craven evasion of responsibility. In his memoir, Schorr prefers to dwell on his testimony before the committee, which foolishly persisted in its effort to compel him to reveal his source. He says now that the committee's interest in his work was particularly upsetting to his parents-in-law, who "were refugees from Nazi Germany." So, like, they had seen all this before.

Schorr's testimony before the committee was carried live on public television. It was a masterpiece of sanctimony—the straight-backed, flared-nostril self-righteousness that many journalists can summon at will. "To betray a source," he announced, "would be, for me, to betray myself, my career, and my life." Within days he was transformed from a pariah—the cad who tried to blame the girl—into a First Amendment martyr. Of course, in

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America the martyrdom of reporters follows a peculiar course. For one thing, the martyr never gets martyred. He scarcely gets inconvenienced. Instead he gets famous, makes lots of money from speaking engagements, and for the next several years is routinely called the "conscience of . . . "—his generation, his craft, his country; you can fill in the blank.

It's a great job, and by his own admission Schorr enjoyed it immensely. Johnny Carson mentioned him in monologues, and the *New York Times* crossword puzzle used his name as the definition of "TV Reporter." His celebrity softened the resentment of higher-ups at CBS—nothing impresses TV people like fame—and for a moment it seemed that Schorr might be reinstated from his suspension. But it was not to be. Schorr knew his tenure at CBS was over when, not long after his testimony, Don Hewitt and *60 Minutes* said they would like him to sit for an interview.

"The Revolution is like Saturn. It eats its children," wrote the poet Buchner about Danton, guillotined by his fellow revolutionaries. Surely there is some irony in the fact that Dan Schorr, pioneer of so many patented hatchet jobs, should fall victim to a CBS hatchet job himself. But when *60 Minutes* came to call, he was simply outclassed. From the program's debut in 1968, Don Hewitt and his colleagues—especially Mike Wallace, who actually conducted the interview with Schorr—had taken the workaday hit piece as practiced by most reporters, with its sly insinuations and careful shadings and imperceptible elisions, and buffed and polished it to a gleaming perfection.

Schorr refers to his *60 Minutes* interview only glancingly in his memoir. The story is more fully told by the reporter Stephan Lesher, in his book *Media Unbound*, published in 1982. By the standards of *60 Minutes*, the Schorr take out was rather low-tech. There were no hidden cameras, no "ambush interviews," no jumpy footage of Wallace chasing Schorr down back alleys and hotel corridors. They weren't necessary. The only technique Wallace needed was the classic "sandbag," in which a subject is lulled into complacency by a sympathetic-seeming interviewer, who then edits the taped interview to fit his (unannounced) thesis.

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Morley Safer, Mike Wallace, and Dan Rather in 1978.

Wallace's interview with Schorr, Lesher notes, went on for seventy-five minutes and was cut down to thirteen. The bulk of it was given over to Schorr's ruminations about the ethics of leaking and effusive praise from Wallace: "Dan," Wallace said as the tape began to roll, "you have my profound admiration and that of your colleagues here and elsewhere." When a camera malfunctioned, requiring them to begin the interview again, Wallace repeated his encomium twice more.

None of this made it into the broadcast. The tape instead was cut to concentrate on matters much more interesting to CBS executives—the Stahl affair, and other in-house problems Schorr had had with his superiors and colleagues at the network. It seemed an unusually parochial exercise for a program devoted to national news, and Schorr came off badly. Not coincidentally, however, the segment aired on a Sunday night before a Monday meeting scheduled between Schorr and his network bosses to discuss his professional future. "The day after *60 Minutes* presented Daniel Schorr to its millions of viewers," Lesher writes, "the erstwhile knight in shining armor was battered. For CBS, there would be fewer public problems from shrugging off an unworthy than there would have been from trying to unhorse a hero." By mutual agreement, Schorr's employment at CBS was terminated.

Hewitt doesn't mention Dan Schorr in his own memoir. Having been with CBS for fifty years, and having overseen *60 Minutes* for thirty-three of those, he has so much else to discuss. (So many hatchet jobs, so little time!) But it must be said that whereas Schorr's memoir is a real book—that is, a book that appears to have been written by its author, with occasional flashes of wit and intelligence—Hewitt's is a celebrity quickie, mostly ghostwritten and lighter than air. I say *mostly* ghostwritten: Mixed in among the many paragraphs about how essential "good writing" is to the TV news business, one finds passages so inept that Hewitt could only have written them himself.

Here he describes how he invented the television "chyron," a technique for superimposing letters over a televised picture: "It suddenly hit me: White letters superimposed on a black background is the way you superimpose names on the screen because the camera will not pick up the black, and you can superimpose that shot over anything you want to and show the letters and the picture simultaneously. Bingo!" You simply cannot pay ghostwriters to be this confusing.

Whoever the ghost was for *Tell Me a Story* (it appears, from the acknowledgments, to have been a journalist named Michael Ruby), the book employs the

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ruthlessly breezy tone that writers adopt when they are trying to stitch together the disconnected reminiscences and opinions of their not-terribly-involved subject. Hewitt is evidently not a reflective man, and even under the guidance of his amanuensis the narrative flops around incoherently. This is too bad. One would have hoped for a real book from Hewitt, for he is indeed the large figure that his boosters say he is. He is clearly, to judge by his book, a boor and a vulgarian, but he is also, to judge by the achievement of *60 Minutes* over three decades, a genius, too. No man has had a greater influence over the way television presents the news.

Don Hewitt, the executive producer of 60 Minutes, *in 1998.*

Hewitt didn't revolutionize television journalism so much as extend it and intensify it, by drawing out the elements of show business and entertainment that had always been latent within it and making them essential to the telling of news stories. He cites the patron saint of TV news, Ed Murrow, as an inspiration. Murrow did genuine news reporting on his show *See It Now*, which solidified his reputation as a newsman; and he did fluffy celebrity interviews on his show *Person to Person*, which made him lots of money. Hewitt had an epiphany: "Why not put them together in one broadcast and reap the benefits of being both prestigious and popular?" The insouciance here is almost endearing: From the start Hewitt thought of journalism not as a means of advancing the public good or elevating the citizenry—none of that Fred Friendly, high-minded baloney for him. Serious journalism was a way to *acquire prestige*. And, of course, he was right. Just as long as it wasn't too serious.

Hewitt's genius was to take the documentary format and "make the information more palatable and feed it [to viewers] in shorter and more digestible bites." He was a master at constructing brief narratives—few segments on *60 Minutes* run longer than thirteen minutes—and he surrounded himself with producers who had the same gift, along with on-air correspondents who had gravelly voices and looked marvelous in trenchcoats. (On *60 Minutes*, of course, producers actually report the story, and Mike and Morley and the other fellas parachute in to do interviews and narrate the text when the cameras start to roll.) The show's success built slowly until, after ten years on the air, it became the most profitable show in the history of television.

Hewitt's method—revised and adapted, to be sure, by practitioners less skilled than he—has since become a kind of house style for features on television news, from the local cable channels on up to the flagship nightly news broadcasts on the networks. There are a few drawbacks to his approach. First, to condense a gripping ten-minute story from a large mass of information, Hewitt's producers have to construct a moral universe that is, to say least, uncomplicated. While facts can't be invented, facts that gum up the story line must be carefully ignored. There are bad guys (usually businessmen, sometimes doctors; soldiers sometimes, too) and good guys (Mike and Morley and the gang), and more often than not the good must triumph over the bad. There's never much question about what emotions the producers are trying to extract from the viewer: awe, revulsion, contempt, admiration. This manipulation, in fact, becomes the point of the story.

The second drawback is related to the first. Because the primary purpose of a successful *60 Minutes* segment is not to convey interesting or useful information but to manipulate a reaction from the viewers, the chances of any given story being true—the chances of it presenting an accurate picture of reality—are only about fifty-fifty. The story's relation to events in the real world is always incidental.

For a journalistic enterprise, this would be a problem. But it has become the condition of television news programming, which is seldom informative but never fails to entertain. (Hewitt's innovations, by the way, are ideologically neutral; they can work just as well on the other side of the political divide, as witness the equally manipulative reports from the right-wing libertarian John Stossel on ABC's *20/20*.)

Not surprisingly, *60 Minutes* has often been sued. Its defenders point out that it has never lost a lawsuit in court, but this is a consequence of CBS's massive legal arsenal and the near-impossibility of bringing a successful case under American libel law. The casualties of *60 Minutes*'s distortions have sometimes managed to develop methods of their own anyway. Interestingly, Hewitt in his book mentions only one example—the Illinois Power Company, of Clinton, Illinois, whose huge cost overruns in the construction of a nuclear power plant brought the attention of *60 Minutes* in 1979.

The theme of the segment was, of course, the dangers and expense of nuclear power, and the emotions, drawn from the viewer with customary Pavlovian relentlessness, were indignation and fright. But the story was inaccurate in many of particulars, as well as its overriding allegations of mismanagement and malfeasance. "We did make some

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factual errors in reporting the Illinois Power story," Hewitt writes, adding, not coherently, "although we were right on the facts—the plant was years behind schedule and the cost overruns were huge—we made some mistakes and frankly admitted that we had."

Hewitt's account of the controversy is inaccurate, too. He and his producers admitted their mistakes only after Illinois Power publicized a videotaped rebuttal to the *60 Minutes* story. The rebuttal included tape it had made of *60 Minutes* producers filming interviews of Illinois Power executives, which demonstrated the tendentious editing their comments had received. It showed that the three on-air sources used by the program either had no expertise, no firsthand knowledge for their allegations, or were anti-nuclear political activists who were not identified as such. The causes of the cost overruns were misidentified, and the producers apparently misunderstood the plant's construction schedules.

There was of course a good story to be told about the exploding costs and schedule delays that almost killed the nuclear power industry in 1979. As Lesher notes in *Media Unbound*, "The elements existed for a sound story filled with furious and significant disagreement among company officials, [state power] commissioners, environmentalists, anti-nuclear activists, citizens groups, and others." This story would have been complicated, however, and difficult to tell. And not at all entertaining. The same could be said of countless other *60 Minutes* stories that have been proved fallacious: its exposé on "sudden acceleration" in Audi automobiles, for example, or its fire-bell warnings about the danger of the pesticide Alar on apples.

Hewitt, like Schorr, is hard to embarrass. But one project in recent years seems to have upset him mightily: the 1999 Hollywood movie *The Insider*, about an aborted *60 Minutes* investigation of the tobacco industry that was supposed to air in 1995. The segment was delayed for three months when Hewitt and CBS executives became worried that it might expose the network to a lawsuit from a tobacco company. The producer who put together the story eventually resigned in protest, but not before portraying Hewitt in newspaper and magazine articles as a tool of the corporate power structure. *The Insider* casts the producer's story as a heroic struggle against capitalist villainy.

Don Hewitt—corporate tool? He is outraged, and in *Tell Me a Story* he writes about the controversy with unaccustomed heat. "Much of *The Insider* is simply wrong. They took so many liberties with my position that I was portrayed as a CBS lackey, which people at my company and other networks know damn well is far from the truth. . . . A lie is a lie."

For a certain kind of audience, *The Insider* must be a marvelously effective movie. It is expertly paced, beautifully photographed, acted with uncanny skill. It constructs a small, uncomplicated moral universe with good guys (the *60 Minutes* producer and a whistle-blower) and very bad guys (corporate executives and Don Hewitt), and the good guys win in the end. It is entertaining above all, and most likely has nothing to do with the events as they actually happened. It resembles nothing so much as a *60 Minutes* segment stretched out and turned into a movie.

No wonder Hewitt is outraged. The Revolution, once again, is eating its children. In his memoir, he objects that the actor who portrayed him in *The Insider* was physically unappealing, but it seemed to this viewer, having read the book and then seen the movie, that the actor had Hewitt down cold. At one point, the Hewitt character objects that something has leaked to the press. "The AP's got the story," he shouts, "and they've been calling Mike and I!" I bet it's the only authentic line in the movie. ♦

Paul Weiss at 100

A century of metaphysics.

BY WILLIAM DESMOND

For quite some time now, metaphysics—traditionally central philosophical discipline—has been looked at askance by philosophers themselves. For Marxists, metaphysics seemed merely religion making a masked reappearance. For Heideggerians and deconstructionists, it was a dubious "onto-theology." For positivists, it was an outdated and pointless intellectual exercise. And for adherents of Anglo-American analytic philosophy (most notably A.J. Ayer, but also Wittgenstein and his heirs), it seemed mostly a confusion about language.

A former president of the Metaphysical Society of America, William Desmond is professor of philosophy and director of the international program in philosophy at the University of Leuven in Belgium. His most recent book is Ethics and the Between *(SUNY Press).*

But even the hostility of philosophers has not quite managed to kill off metaphysics—primarily because the questions it asks still remain with us, hidden in seeds in everyday life, and once properly asked, those questions burst forth again with all the force of elemental surprise. The metaphysical enterprise, philosophy in the "grand style," is simply philosophy as it was from its beginning: an intellectual exploration of being, an investigation of reality that tries to offer some argued vision of the whole and the place of human beings within it.

The American philosopher Paul Weiss, who celebrated his hundredth birthday on May 19 this year, is too American and commonsensical to claim for himself without qualification the mantle of philosophy's grand style. But for more than seventy years, his vocation has been to ask the hard questions

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and to try to answer them in the most comprehensive terms possible. More than any other figure, Paul Weiss kept the discipline of metaphysics alive in American thought and thus ensured that first philosophy—the tradition of philosophy at its highest, most basic, and most serious pitch—would survive to be handed on to new generations.

Weiss was born in New York in 1901, the child of Jewish immigrants (his father from Hungary, his mother from Germany). He discovered philosophy as an undergraduate at City College, and, on moving to graduate study at Harvard, he had the good fortune to find Alfred North Whitehead to direct his doctoral dissertation. Whitehead had spent much of his life in England as a mathematician and logician, and is perhaps most famous for co-authoring with Bertrand Russell the *Principia Mathematica*. On coming to the United States from England in the 1920s to start a second career, he was born again as a metaphysician, and deeply impressed Weiss, remaining in his memory as embodying something like greatness.

At that time, strongly positivistic influences were emerging in the United States. Weiss originally saw himself as a logician, but as he widened his horizons, he came to think that philosophy must be more generous in the range of its questioning. It must make some effort to address the root problems of metaphysics, as well as the full dimensions of human existence, with special emphasis on the practices of art, religion, history, and even cinema and sports.

With Charles Hartshorne, while both were graduate students at Harvard, he did pioneering work on the first complete edition of the works of Charles Sanders Peirce (widely acknowledged as America's most eminent philosopher). After Harvard, he spent 1929 and 1930 in Europe, where he attended lectures by Husserl and Heidegger, whose work raised in him undefined suspicions. On his return to the United States he taught at Bryn Mawr until moving to Yale, where in 1946 he was the first Jewish academic to be offered a full professorship. He had an illustrious career at Yale as Sterling professor and was a much-admired mentor to many students who went on to influential positions in all walks of American life.

He served as president of the American Philosophical Association, despite the fact that he rejected the style of philosophizing dominant in that national association. Indeed, he proved himself a person of surprising practical savvy as well as theoretical finesse, founding in the late 1940s the Metaphysical Society of America and starting an immensely successful (and still thriving) philosophical journal, the *Review of Metaphysics*. He also founded the Philosophy of Education Society. He retired from Yale in 1969 at the then statutory age of sixty-eight, and after a brief stint at the University of Denver, went to Catholic University in Washington, D.C., where he continued to teach until his retirement in 1994.

Weiss in the 1970s

Courtesy of Jude Dougherty and Catholic University of America

During these years, a string of books, covering an extensive array of topics, flowed from his pen. His first was entitled simply *Reality*. (The title signals a subtle criticism of Whitehead's *Process and Reality*, which had perhaps more process than reality, and of F.H. Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*, which similarly seemed more interested in appearance than reality.) Later books include a major work of metaphysics, *Modes of Being* (1958), *The World of Art* (1961), *The God We Seek* (1964), *Sport: A Philosophic Inquiry* (1969), *Beyond all Appearances* (1974), *First Considerations* (1977), *You, I and the Others* (1980), *Privacy* (1983), and *Toward a Perfected State* (1986). In addition, he has published twelve volumes of an ongoing philosophical journal, *Philosophy in Process*. *Being and Other Realities* appeared in 1995—the same year the distinguished *Library of Living Philosophers* devoted a volume to his career, with the many sides of his work discussed by twenty-eight of his peers. And last year, at ninety-nine, he produced *Emphatics*, yet another philosophical investigation.

It adds up to one of the most extraordinary careers in American philosophy. Extraordinary because of Weiss's irrepressible curiosity, which has led him into a variety of fields and subjects. He devoted one of his sabbatical years to learning how to paint, attending cinematic sessions, taking dance lessons, trying to write poetry, and even attending cooking classes—all with the aim of getting a feel for the arts from the insider's view of the practitioner. (Some of his sketches are reproduced in the *Library of Living Philosophers* volume.) He was a pioneer in the philosophy of sport at a time when the topic was unknown, and his book is still referred to with respect.

Yet, in all this, Weiss has continued the task set by the great thinkers of the philosophical tradition, even though his attention to such phenomena as the cinema marks him also as a man of his own time. (He was even for a time a regular guest on the television talk show of his former student at Yale, Dick Cavett.) Weiss is especially to be remembered for his insistence that our time is not peculiarly exempt from the fact that there are basic questions about the nature of reality, truth, knowing, goodness, and beauty.

These questions arise from the native curiosity of the human being, in all times, and they demand to be addressed apart from all sectarian allegiances. Doing philosophy is not the same as joining a school or signing up for a fashion. It requires the courage of an intel-

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lectual fidelity simply to the basic questions themselves, even if this puts one in the position of an outsider. Such initiatives as his founding of the *Review of Metaphysics* were defensive—in the most constructive sense. Precisely because the culture of many intellectuals and academics was hostile to metaphysical questions, Paul Weiss took practical steps to create a space where, free of sectarian or scholastic allegiances, independent thinkers could productively discuss their philosophical work.

There are some constants in Weiss's philosophical outlook, despite its range. He is committed to a form of metaphysical pluralism that insists both on the real multiplicity of individuals and on the existence of certain ultimates. One can trace through his work, culminating in *Being and Other Realities*, a movement towards a deeper sense of Being itself, the ultimate of ultimates. Weiss's philosophy has always been marked with a sane respect for common sense—but sane respect is not the same as the consecration of common sense. Science may be one crucial way to penetrate reality more deeply, but it is by no means the only way. The practices of ethical life and politics have as much to do with reality as does science. Art, religion, and philosophy itself are also vital ways to get to the roots of things.

Weiss's concern with art and the philosophy of art mirrors his wider fascination with all aspects of creativity, whether in mathematics, the human character, or the work of statesmen. But, interestingly, he denies that philosophy is creative. Philosophy must simply be true to what is and cannot "make things up."

This is a strongly realistic side of his thought, not perhaps fashionable with those who see "truth" as just another construction. In his most recent book, *Emphatics*, he puts an emphasis on *emphasis* itself: on how our experience of reality is punctuated with stresses of importance and value; on how reality itself, in diverse forms, punctuates itself with stresses of importance.

Paul Weiss continues to think, to talk, and to write. Among his students and friends, it is rumored that he is close to completing yet another book, this time on the philosophical significance of "surrogates," again an intriguing subject. We wait to see what will come of his investigations, but we know there is one place where surrogates cannot satisfy: in a life lived in dedication to the vocation of being a philosopher. On his hundredth birthday, one can say of Paul Weiss that the philosopher of surrogates has no philosophical surrogate. ♦

Pearl Harbor Bombs

A movie that will live in infamy.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

The director Michael Bay had a dream one night as he considered how to film an epic movie about the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. In his dream, he followed a bomb, falling from a plane, as it descended ever more rapidly to crash into the deck of a ship. He awakened, gripped with an obsession to realize his vision on film. And in the mammoth new *Pearl Harbor*, Bay's vision is realized. The bomb falling from a Japanese Zero, which comes about halfway through the movie's three hours, is *Pearl Harbor*'s "money shot."

Securing the money shot for a high-budget action film has become a Hollywood obsession ever since the first commercial for *Independence Day* ran during the Super Bowl in 1996. The commercial featured an alien spacecraft blowing up the White House, and it electrified the moviegoing public, which then had to wait breathlessly for six months until the film finally opened on July 3. *Independence Day* earned $50 million in its first weekend, shattering all previous records, and market research indicated the audience had been drawn to it primarily because of repeated exposure to the money shot.

The term "money shot" actually comes from the world of pornography. It refers to a sex film's climactic moment, which is designed to leave nothing to the imagination. The money shot in mainstream action movies is achieved through the magic of special effects, but the intent is the same: To cause the watcher to gasp and shudder.

And never has the money shot been quite so pornographic as it is in *Pearl Harbor*. Michael Bay removes all the horror and tragedy from the Japanese sneak attack, leaving only the sensation—the explosions, the fire, the aerial acrobatics. It's the way-coolest depiction of the destruction of 2,273 soldiers and sailors and much of America's Pacific fleet you will ever see.

None of the bodies bobbing in the water or trapped in the wreckage of the USS *Arizona* belong to characters we know or care about, whose death might give us a sense of what was lost on December 7, 1941. For some bizarre reason, *Pearl Harbor* is a movie about pilots, not seamen, and only one major character suffers even an injury in the attack. *Pearl Harbor* reduces a world-changing event to a noisy computer simulation. The bombs, bullets, and explosions are the real heroes of this movie because, man, they really do their stuff.

That's why *Pearl Harbor* is as obscene as porn videos that feature a real, live money shot. And when *Pearl Harbor* is not obscene, it's almost unbelievably stupid. I am not exaggerating when I say it may have the worst screenplay ever written. The dialogue by Randall Wallace is so bad, many of the scenes could be performed verbatim on *Saturday Night Live* as parodies. Right after the attack, a woman confesses in a frustrated whine: "I was going to tell you, but then . . . This Happened!" Later, the

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Buena Vista

Josh Hartnett and Ben Affleck in Pearl Harbor

great flying ace Jimmy Doolittle (Alec Baldwin) looks over his squadron and says, "I think we're going to win this war, and you know why? Them. There's nothing braver than the heart of a volunteer." And in a scene that will live in infamy, Franklin Roosevelt (Jon Voight, and no, I'm not kidding) rises from his wheelchair to his feet and tells his depressed military staff, "Do not tell me what can't be done!"

The plot, if you can call it that, concerns two lifelong friends, played by Ben Affleck and Josh Hartnett. They join the Army and become pilots. Ben is a cocky lad who always breaks the rules. Josh is awkward with the ladies because his daddy didn't treat him right back in Tennessee.

In 1940, Ben volunteers to fly for the British, but doesn't tell Josh, because he's always trying to protect Josh. But before he goes, he falls in love with the beautiful nurse (Kate Beckinsale) who gives him a shot in his posterior during his physical. "He has a nice butt," she tells her tittering friends in one of the movie's persistent and unintentionally hilarious anachronisms. (My favorite comes in the attack, when Josh says, "I think World War II just started!")

In England, Ben pines for Kate. In Hawaii, Kate pines for Ben. One day Ben gets shot down. We see his plane crash into the English Channel. Then we see Josh come to give Kate the bad news. As the movie inches forward with all the speed and excitement of a tortoise race, Josh and Kate fall in love—guilt-riddled love, of course, because they're both thinking of Ben.

Meanwhile, in Japan, an attack is being planned.

One morning, Kate vomits in the bathroom. Guess what? She's pregnant. And before she can tell Josh, who should show up but . . . you guessed it! It's Ben! We then get to see what happened when his plane crashed. It was sinking in the English Channel, but he saw Kate's face floating in the water outside his cockpit and somehow found the strength to break through the glass and escape into occupied France. Which is why he couldn't get a message out to tell Josh and Kate not to indulge in nooky.

Ben figures out what has happened. He punches Josh, and then they fall asleep in a convertible overlooking Honolulu Harbor—from which we cut to a Japanese general tearing a date off his calendar to expose "December 7."

Ben and Josh are awakened by the bombs. We see the bombers as they fly over a tableau lifted from Ronald Reagan's "It's Morning in America" commercials in 1984—three boy scouts in a tent, a woman hanging laundry on a clothesline, a Little League game (at 8 in the morning?). What follows is forty-five minutes of explosions and dogfights, and weirdly photographed scenes of Kate at the hospital trying to deal with the wounded and dying.

Pearl Harbor's first half is almost entirely unrelated to the attack, and the film makes no effort to explain what we're seeing during the strike—where the U.S. ships are, what they do, or what the Japanese battle plan is. Ben and Josh do manage to shoot down some enemy planes—but that comes after the damage has been done (although the film suggests that their entry into the battle is what convinces the Japanese to go home, thus turning defeat into victory).

With the bombing over, it's time to get back to the insufferable story. Kate tells Ben that she's having Josh's baby. But she doesn't tell Josh. And then Josh and Ben leave Hawaii to join Jimmy Doolittle in the daring retaliatory raid on Tokyo. It seems to have been Bay's original intention to suggest that Doolittle's raid followed immediately afterward—since a sarong-wearing Kate shows no visible signs of pregnancy on the day of the raid, five months following Pearl Harbor.

As Ben and Josh fly over Japan, Bay offers a parallel image to his Morning-in-America montage. Three women are standing on a little wooden bridge at the foot of something that looks like Mt. Fuji. Bay surely intends to make a point here about how war disrupts civilian life, but it actually looks like our heroes are on their way to blow up a high-school production of *The Mikado*.

There's about fifteen minutes left of this travesty, which finally resolves its love triangle by killing off one of the two boys, in a hilarious recapitulation of the movie's opening scene. And so, once again, everything bows to Hollywood's insistence that movies have "arc"—even a movie about the bloodiest and most important war the world has ever seen.

Like Michael Bay, I have had a dream—a dream in which Hollywood does not defile and degrade history in pursuit of this year's money shot. Unlike Michael Bay, I have no hope of seeing my dream turned into a reality. ♦

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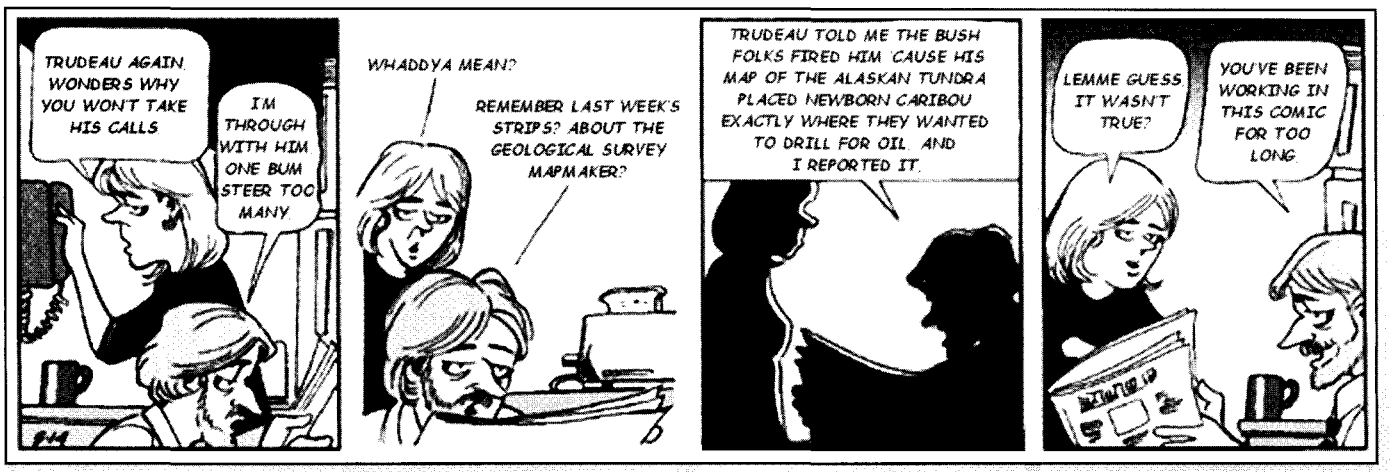
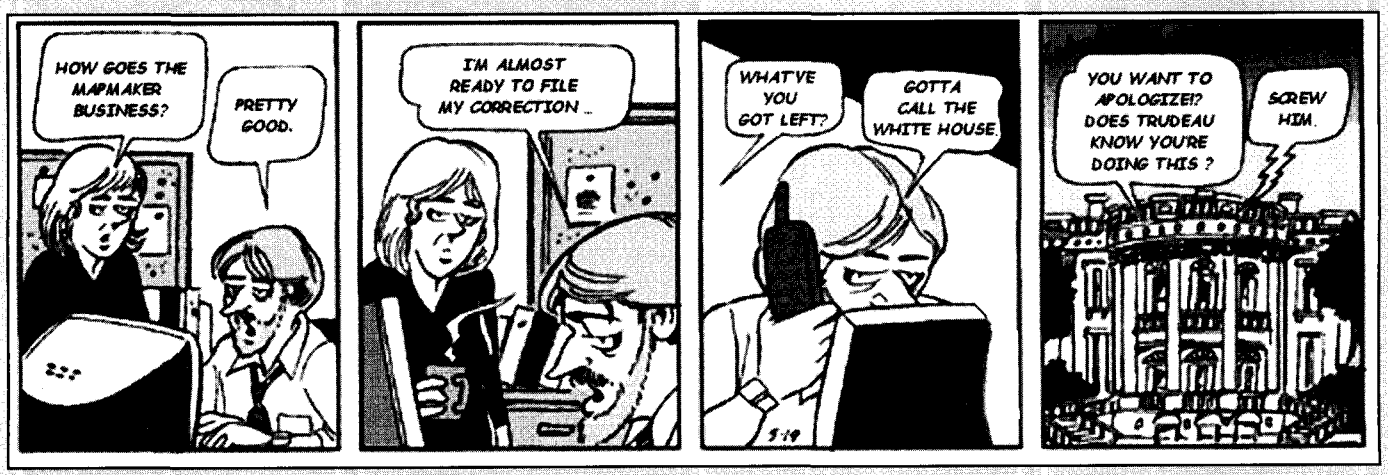
Parody

Fired government mapmaker Ian Thomas made the funny pages, as Garry Trudeau recounted his plight in six "Doonesbury" strips. "It turned out that the Alaska caribou calve exactly where Secretary Norton wants to drill!" Trudeau's fictional *Washington Post* reporter declared. "So the offending map was yanked off the Net, and the unwitting mapmaker was sacked." It's quite a story. But it's not quite a true story. It certainly isn't the whole story.

—*Washington Post*, May 21, 2001





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Tax Reform?

Alvin Rabushka is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution and coauthor, with Robert E. Hall, of *The Flat Tax.*

Every year, American taxpayers face the mid-April ritual of filing their federal income tax returns with dread. The year 2001 was no different. Is relief on the way?

President George W. Bush pushed hard for $1.6 trillion in tax relief over the next ten years. Congress approved a smaller number, closer to $1.3 trillion. His plan will lower marginal tax rates, ease the marriage penalty, and perhaps lower estate taxes. Even if his plan is adopted in full, it will not simplify the tax code.

In 1981, Professor Robert E. Hall and I proposed a flat tax for the United States. The forms were so simple that tax returns could be filed on a postcard. The idea was popular in the early 1980s and again in the mid-1990s. Special interests and opponents of low tax rates, however, blocked its adoption.

The flat tax has met success in unlikely quarters. On January 1, 1994, Estonia, a postcommunist transition economy, implemented a 26 percent flat tax. Latvia followed with a 25 percent flat tax a year later. Croatia followed with a tax reform that embodies the core features of the flat tax. All of them have worked well in practice.

The most dramatic story took place in Russia. Under its new president, Vladimir Putin, Russia implemented a 13 percent flat tax beginning January 1, 2001. It replaced a three-bracket personal income tax system that had a top rate of 30 percent but which few wealthy Russians paid.

How has this 13 percent flat tax worked? In remarks at the Ministry of Finance on April 16, 2001, President Putin reported that income tax revenues for the first quarter of this year were running 62 percent ahead of last year at this time and ahead of earlier projections due, in large measure, to the new 13 percent flat tax. President Putin has repeatedly pointed to the 13 percent flat tax as one of the key policy achievements of his new government. (Details can be found at www.russiaeconomy.org.)

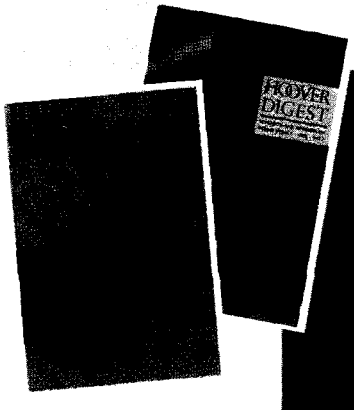
Three Polish political parties plan to introduce a flat tax in the Polish legislature in the next few years. The Chinese Taxpayer Press, the leading publisher of tax books in China, has inquired about translation rights for *The Flat Tax* (Hoover Press).

It is important to reduce tax burdens and marginal tax rates. But **the Bush plan, even after its full enactment, will still leave the incredibly complicated nightmare of the federal income tax largely in place,** burdened with deductions, exemptions, credits, the alternative minimum tax, and other absurdities that require professional tax advice and help with preparation of returns.

Let us hope that, once President Bush can claim victory for his tax cut, he will turn his attention to real tax reform in the coming years, emulating President Putin's bold vision of a low, simple, flat tax.

— Alvin Rabushka

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.



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A world of ideas on public policy.

Burying the big population story

by Ben J. Wattenberg

The overwhelming demographic story of our time has somehow failed to make it into the headlines. Here it is, in short: Never have birth and fertility rates fallen so far, so fast, so low, for so long, all over the world, already yielding some population decline, with much more to come. That story continues to be buried by the noise of "the population explosion", a powerful trend that peaked decades ago, but which is still promoted by environmental alarmists and their allies.

Recently, however, the United Nations Population Division had started "unburying" the facts. Some projection techniques were modified to partially account for starkly falling fertility. The UN's "Replacement Migration: Is it a Solution to Declining and Aging Populations?" caused a firestorm. It predicted that European nations will either take in large numbers of immigrants, or suffer grievous economic damages.

But now, alas, the recent release of the "highlights" of the new UN biennial reference book "World Population Prospects – The 2000 Revisions", once again buries the big story. That is too bad, because only the UN has the standing to correct the central misconception of our time.

Consider the gist of the first four items of the executive summary of the document. World population is growing by 77 million per year, going from 6.1 billion today to 9.3 billion in 2050, according to the "medium variant" projection. The gain will come entirely in the Less Developed Regions (LDR), even though the LDR "projection assumes continuing declines in fertility". The population of the modern "More Developed Regions" (MDR) is "anticipated to change little". The 2050 global projection comes out at 413 million more people than previously reported.

Shouldn't we be investing more in improving healthcare and education in the less developed regions where populations are growing?

"More people" was the functional UN lead, and that is how the Associated Press, among other news organizations, reported the story. But saying that developed nations won't lose population in the next 50 years is simply not accurate. Europe, Japan and almost every other developed country will suffer severe population losses, while the United States is projected to grow.

Thus, the 2000 population of Europe is 727 million and the UN's "medium" projection for 2050 is 603 million – a loss of 124 million people or 17%, an unprecedented drop. The "low" (and probably more likely) projection puts Europe at 556 million – a loss of 171 million or 24%.

America, on the other hand, is slated to grow from 283 million today to 397 million in 2050. But that American projection assumes increasing fertility and immigration, which is dubious. American fertility has been below the replacement rate of 2.1 children per woman for 30 consecutive years. Why would it go up? It is equally unlikely that immigration will go up, given trends elsewhere. Demographers say that Mexico, for example, has already breached the 2.1 rate, down from a 1965-70 rate of 6.8 children. Like Mexico, there are already 21 nations from the LDR that have fertility rates below the replacement rate, including China, Thailand, Cuba, both North and South Korea, and Kazakhstan.

The problem is not that the UN has made poor projections, but that it labels fairly high projections as "medium". That word is immediately misinterpreted as "most likely", and in the media it is then further transmuted into "fact". And so we read that the UN is predicting that the world population will rise from about 6 billion to about 9 billion and keep growing – instead of a more likely course of going from 6 billion to about 8 billion and declining.

There is a big difference between growing and declining, especially when we consider the serious policy implications of population decline. How will the developed countries sustain their healthcare and pension systems if their populations are aging even more rapidly than we had thought? And shouldn't we be investing more – much more – in improving healthcare and education in the less developed regions where populations are growing? Reporting growth when the likelihood is decline postpones consideration of these serious issues. And that is why burying the big story can be dangerous.

Ben J. Wattenberg is a Senior Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI). His most recent book, The First Measured Century, is available from AEI, 1150 Fifteenth Street, Washington, D.C. (www.aei.org).

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